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T R E A T I S E

ON THE

I M M U T A B I L I T Y

M O R A L T R U T H.

By CATHARINE MACAULAY GRAHAM.

L O N D O N,

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M D C C L X X X I I I.

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glory and happiness of man to be given him
has been set forth on the right side as
follows:—

P R E F A C E.

THOUGH the arguments which have been urged for the evidences of natural and revealed religion, carry with them a conviction sufficient to refute, if not to silence, the adversaries of religious sentiment; yet sceptical opinions on the moral attributes of the Deity, on his omnipotence in the proper sense of the word, and on his just and providential government over all the works of his creation, have gained a general ground in the weak and unstable minds of men.

Sceptical opinions, on these interesting subjects, militate with formidable hostility against every rational hope of any improvement in those higher parts of civilization which affect the rational interest of the species; and threaten the loss of every

principle of human conduct, but such as take their rise from the fears and hopes of men; as such fears and hopes are actuated upon by the fluctuating state of laws, customs, manners, and opinions.

Lord Bolingbroke, whose doctrines, with their pernicious tendency, have been set forth in the following Treatise, has endeavoured to explode all those higher parts of philosophy which treat on the sublime subjects of theology and morals; and he very earnestly recommends the study of that part of nature which lies level to the knowledge of sense; whilst other writers speak with great contempt on this inferior part of science, and condemn, as a degradation to philosophy, the giving the august title of philosopher to those who make it their business to study some of the secrets of nature, and spend their whole life in experimental trials on the weight of the air, and the virtues of the load-

roadstone. And thus much may be said for the truth of this observation, that though the discoveries which have been lately made in the inferior parts of natural philosophy, as they undeniably refute all the puerile principles on which atheism is founded, they would, if rightly applied, confirm our belief in the existence of a first intelligent Cause, and the omnipotence of the Deity, in the most extensive sense of the word ; and, consequently, by a consistent chain of arguments, produce a conviction of the moral as well as the physical perfection of God, and his justice and benevolence to all his creatures ; yet such has been the perverse state of men's minds, and such the prevalence of sensual over intellectual enjoyment, that, in proportion as the species have been enabled, by the progress of science, to partake, in a more enlarged manner, of the bounties of the Creator, and to be more convinced, on the cer-

tain grounds of experience, of the truth of religious principle, they have discarded all the sublime parts of knowledge, and directed their whole attention to the pursuit of a fleeting and uncertain felicity.

The principles of a rational belief in the protection of an all-perfect and omnipotent Being, the practice of virtue in this life, and the hopes of a more enlarged and a more permanent state of happiness in a life to come, are so congenial to the natural ambition of man, and so necessary to produce any settled contentment of mind on this side of the grave, that the consideration of these truths produced in the author's mind a belief, that some causes, more powerful than mere depravity of will, had acted to the general perversion of human sentiment: and a more accurate survey of the subject induced an opinion, that the decline of rational religion had been effected by the concur-

rent operation of superstition and libertinism; and that these baneful principles had received their strength and support from that deviation from the true source of moral differences which have been made by the late moral writers; some having fixed the principles of moral virtue, in mere human sentiment, on the subject of utility, whilst others have taught that moral obligations are not founded on the real difference of things, but take their rise from the laws of God, as they are found in his revealed will, or as they are impressed on the consciences of his rational creatures.

The mischievous consequence of the first of these opinions lies open to the reason of every attentive and intelligent mind; and though the last is veiled, from common observation, by a sentiment which carries a seeming respect to the transcendent power of the Deity, and the allegiance which is due from the creature to the Crea-

tor; yet it insensibly strips God of some of his most glorious attributes, and leads men into the worst kind of scepticism, if not into downright atheism, by weakening those strong principles of natural reason which support the belief of revelation, the providential government of God, and the sanction of future rewards and punishments.

That God's power is omnipotent in the largest sense of the word, and that his works and commands are founded in righteousness, and not in mere will, I have endeavoured to prove in the following Treatise; and I have the pleasure to find, on reading Dr. Clarke, whose excellent discourses were put into my hands after my Treatise was written, that this very eminent divine preaches exactly the same doctrine; and that even on the very delicate and intricate subject, treated on in the fourth chapter of this Treatise, there is no very apparent difference between us.

Dr.

Dr. Clarke, in treating on the subject of the freedom of the omnipotent Agent, whilst he confutes the weak and shallow arguments used by Spinoza, in his attempt to prove that God created all things by the impulse of a physical necessity, strongly asserts, that the moral perfections of God subjects him to a kind of moral necessity, to act, in all things, agreeable to the transcendent excellence of his nature. And, indeed, this is so necessary to every idea of immutability in the divine conduct, and so consonant to every comprehensive idea of infinite power and infinite perfection, that it is surprising that the heat of contention should ever have induced any intelligent reasoner to deny it. In treating on the liberty of man, Dr. Clarke seems only desirous of freeing human agency from every degree of physical necessity, but that moral necessity which arises from the dictates of the

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the understanding, or the impulse of ill regulated passions : he acknowledges in as extensive a latitude as they are set forth in this Treatise* : and, indeed, the great and only difficulty which seems to lie on the question, arises from the intricate nature of the difference between natural liberty and moral necessity ; the one implying a practical liberty, and the other a restraint on that practical li-

* Every moral action which man performs, says Dr. Clarke, is free, and without any compulsion or natural necessity, and proceeds either from some good motive or some evil one. Again, says the same Author, though probably no rational creature can be in a strict philosophical sense impeccable ; yet we may easily conceive how God can place such creatures as he judges worthy of so excellent a gift, in such a state of knowledge and near communion with himself, where goodness and holiness shall appear so amiable, and where they shall be exempt from all means of temptation and corruption, that it shall never be possible, notwithstanding the natural liberty of their will, to be seduced from their unchangeable happiness, in the everlasting choice and enjoyment of their greatest good, which is the state of good angels, and of the saints in heaven. Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, 8vo, edit. pages 125, 273.

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berty existing in certain causes, independent of the agent, which induces a state of mind inimical to the giving rise to those motions which are necessary to the producing volitions which accord with the line of duty, and the dictates of a well informed understanding, causes which, on an accurate investigation, will be found entirely to exist either in an ignorance of our rational interest, or in an ignorance of the mechanism of the human mind, and the proper method of disciplining it; and as these causes can never be removed but by the knowledge acquired by an early education, or by an experience painfully and attentively gained, the observations made in the fourth chapter of this Treatise, on the doctrine of a philosophical or a moral necessity, may be found advantageous to the freeing natural liberty from a great part of that moral necessity which has hitherto

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hitherto produced the commission of
much evil.

It must be allowed, that the heat
of contention has induced Dr. Clarke
to maintain and vindicate an absolute
independent freedom, by arguments
altogether unworthy of that admir-
able clearness and conclusiveness
which are to be found in his evi-
dences for natural and revealed re-
ligion; such as that motives and sen-
sations being mere abstract notions,
they can have no physical power, for
it is not a physical power which is
contended for, but a determining
power arising from the action of one
immaterial substance over another,
which may be done by the means
of thought, as well as one material
substance can move another material
substance in the way of impulse: and
though the heat of contention may
have farther induced Dr. Clarke, and
others, to insist on a power of voli-
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tion in some cases where the mind is supposed to be in a state of perfect indifference, yet as all volitions in man, which are made with such a frigidity of sentiment as to be said to be altogether independent of motive, must be of so negative a nature as neither to constitute merit or demerit; and especially as this indifference must be removed, whenever a motive presents itself to the mind; and as the supposition, that God can ever act independent of the best motive, is a plain contradiction to his acknowledged perfection, such an indifference does not appear to be a point in argument worthy contention: and it is to be hoped, that this consideration will bring matters to an amicable decision between the two contending parties.

As a knowledge of the mechanism of the human mind appears to be essential to a consistent uniform practice of religious and moral duty, Mr.

Locke

Locke and Dr. Hartley stand the foremost among the literary benefactors of mankind; but Dr. Hartley would perhaps have sunk in oblivion, had it not been for the judicious and well-timed zeal of Dr. Priestley, whose successful endeavours, with those of Mr. Jonathan Edwards, to clear the doctrine of moral necessity from the dark perplexity in which it lay involved by Hobbes and other mischievous writers, and to prove it consistent with the freedom, power, and infinite perfections of God, and the rational agency of man, ought to render their writings, on this important subject, valuable to all those who have a due regard to the moral happiness of themselves and their posterity.

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T R E A T I S E
I M M U T A B I L I T Y
M O R A L T R U T H.

C H A P. I.

On the present State of Morals.

THERE is, perhaps, no one position to which a more universal assent has been given, than that virtue, which, in its abstract or general sense, includes all the relative duties which man owes to his Creator and his fellow-creatures, must, from the necessary connection of things, and the inseparable union of moral causes, with their effects, produce the *summum bonum* of his ultimate happiness: and that, as far as he deviates from the strict line of moral rectitude, from a propriety and decency of action, which harmonizes with that unerring rule of right, which lies open to the

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investigation of reason, so far he recedes from the rational interest of his nature. How comes it then, that, whilst the human species have, from an unremitting exertion of all the powers of the mind, been improving in those modes of civilization, which affect a very subordinate and inferior part of their interest, the province of morals, which promises so rich a harvest, should lie a barren waste; and whilst every nerve of body, and every faculty of the soul, is strained to discover those secrets in nature, which may conduce to pamper the appetites, and enlarge the gratifications of sense, the pursuit of our rational interest should be totally neglected, and all the means of securing it be considered only as a matter of amusing speculation, to divert the hours of leisure, when the toils of business and the satiety of pleasure demand some relaxation from the ordinary pursuit?

It is true, that some persons, by the coincidences arising from a peculiar structure of body and mind, with those external advantages which go under the denomination of the goods of fortune, are inclined to see all the œconomy of human manners in a fa-

a favourable light ; and these have asserted, that the civilization of mankind, in the higher sense of improvement, has kept pace with their industry in that inferior sense of civilization mentioned in the text ; whilst others have fancied, that a fixed and determined corruption of the species reflects a kind of dishonour on the Divine mind and a governing Providence, and, through the influence of a prejudice arising from a mistaken religious sentiment, they have persuaded themselves into a belief, that the morals of mankind have kept pace with other parts of improvement, and that every kind of civilization, which affects the interest of man, is in a progressive state of amendment.

Such a philanthropy, though it may render the persons who possess it very amiable in the eyes of their own species, yet it will not act to their real advantage ; nor will the patient man receive more benefit from such flattering writers, than that individual, whose physician told him that his symptoms were all of the favourable kind, at that very period of his existence, which touched on the fatal moment of his dissolution : since, then, these bewitching representations can

only tend to delude that interest, which every honest writer must wish to serve, it is our duty to consider what grounds there are, in the present state of men and manners, for the position, that the much boasted civilization of the world has meliorated the vicious part of human nature; and that the subject of morals, that ample field of literature, which has afforded matter for discussion, from the first rise of philosophy to the present hour, is, in this enlightened age, well understood, and its precepts generally followed.

Before we state the question concerning the progress of man to that ultimate state of moral perfection, to which some philosophers have supposed him capable of arriving, and to which the higher faculties of the mind seem directly to tend, it will be necessary to take notice of those different opinions which have prevailed on the natural vice and virtue of the human heart; or, to speak in more philosophical terms, to take notice of the question, whether the vicious appetites, and selfish passions of the creature man, are in general superior to his beneficent affections, and of a force sufficient to bear down all the considerations and motives which arise from a religious sense

sense of duty to God, and of moral obligations, flowing from his relative situation, to the creatures of his own rank, and those subordinate species in the animal creation, which God has placed under his protection, with a permission to use for his assistance and nourishment?

The reason, perhaps, that men have differed so entirely in their opinions concerning the virtue and benevolence of the human heart, its malignity and depravity, may arise from their different situations in life, as well as from their different tempers and characters. Lord Shaftesbury, whose mind irradiated by science, seems to be incapable of any impressions but those which wisdom must approve, and which naturally flow from the influence of benign affections, and whose happy situation in life concealed from his observation the base and selfish motives by which the very large majority of men are actuated, contends for the inherent virtues of the human character, and a kind of instinctive inclination, which, if properly cultivated, would lead men to prefer the study of the first beauty to all the incentives of sense, arising from a contemplation of inferior excellence, and to prefer

the imitation of that virtue, which all the works of nature loudly proclaim to be in the divine mind; whilst others, such as Hobbes and Mandeville, who, from a more adverse fortune, have, perhaps, had a better opportunity of experiencing the vices of mankind, contend with much obstinacy for such an irreclaimable depravity and turpitude of affection annexed to the human character, as will admit of no alleviation or reformation, and which can only be kept within the bounds of order by the scourge and the halter.

Which of these descriptions is most suitable to the human character, we shall not in this place determine; nor enter into the question, whether man is necessarily and fatally determined to evil, or whether that turpitude of conduct and principle, which is too apparent to all, but to those whose high and opulent situations in life occasion them to see their fellow-creatures in a mask, does not proceed from ignorance, and a variety of innumerable causes, which too powerfully act on the frail and dependent nature of man; and which are not evils of an irremediable kind, nor superior to the honest exertion of those intellectual faculties which

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constitute the essence of moral agency? We shall, in this place, content ourselves with observing, that there are no opinions which can more conduce to increase the degeneracy of human manners, than such as have been advanced by Hobbes and Mandeville, viz. that there is a rooted incurable depravity in man, which will ever accompany him through all the stages of human society; or even those which have been avowed by some persons who have professed a larger share of philanthropy, viz. that human virtue, such as it is, is fixed in a kind of medium, between the extreme of depravity and the extreme of excellence, by the unalterable law of nature; and, consequently, that every proposed plan of amendment must be founded in a vain and groundless hope: and thus all systems which are calculated to produce reformation, will, consequently, be treated as the chimerical projects of an uninformed, though splendid imagination.

The late Mr. Harris, in his Philological Enquiries, has laboured much to vindicate the honour of the present times. He asserts, that good men have ever been inclined to harbour very disadvantageous opinions of

their contemporaries, and to discover a great disparity in their disfavour, in the comparison between them and their ancestors; and though this may be, in some measure, the case, from the strength with which we are apt to feel the present evil, yet history furnishes a sufficient number of facts and anecdotes to direct the inquisitive and the discerning in what manner to fix, with a tolerable degree of justice, the comparative quantum of vice and virtue, which, at different periods of time, have prevailed in those ages of society which have been rescued from oblivion by the pen of history.

If it is allowed, that those different complexions of administrations, which take their colour from the different nature and tendency of laws and governments; if the examples of the great, if the police of societies have any effect over the general manners of the people, will it be a rational supposition that the purest stages of the Roman Republic, and the Greek Commonwealths, produced such a combination of flagitious wickedness, as became but too manifest in the period immediately preceding the fall of the Roman state, and among the

Greeks

Inmutability of Moral Truth.

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Greeks in the reign of Philip of Macedon ? And as every efficient cause, whether moral or natural, must, in all periods, and in all circumstances, produce its proportional effect ; so when contingences of a similar influence arise in society, they produce either the exaltation or the depravity of human manners, according to the different nature of their influence, whether of the benign or the malignant kind.

The world, I know, has been represented, by many distinguished writers, as being in a rapid state of progressive improvement ; and commerce has been celebrated as a Deity, whose universal influence on the happiness of man is felt in present enjoyment, and in a prospective increasing felicity ; but it will be found, on an accurate survey of these temporal advantages, that the enlarged knowledge of mankind has acted merely to the improvement of that subordinate interest mentioned in the beginning of this work : and as to commerce, in the present ignorant and negligent state of men's minds on the subject of their only valuable pursuit, it naturally tends, by affording the means of extending the gratifications of sense beyond their proper bounds, to destroy that due balance

balance which nature has formed between corporeal appetites and mental enjoyments: it furnishes means to delude the imagination, by an endless variety of fantastic objects of happiness; and though it must be allowed to soften that barbarous fierceness, which the want of means, or the want of incentives towards a general communication produced in the manners of our ancestors, yet as men are much more prone to copy the vices and follies of those with whom they associate, than their good qualities; and as vice is a much more glaring feature, in all societies, than virtue, so commerce has acted with a prevalence and an universality superior to every other cause in the spreading the contagion of a flagitious luxury: besides, the essential principles of commerce tend to increase that selfishness in man, which most powerfully militates against the qualities of honesty, integrity, frugality, moderation, sobriety, and a conscientious regard to the interests of the community at large, and to the private good of individuals.

Some consequences, and, indeed, such as by a proper attention to our superior interest, may be rendered of a very import-

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ant nature, are annexed to the more general use of letters and the extensiveness of commerce ; but, if civilization is any thing more than an alteration in the modes of vice and error, we have not yet attained to any laudable degree of civilization.

It is true, we have got rid of some prejudices, which are found, by experience, to have a tendency to narrow our pleasures and enjoyments, and to be productive of mutual and unnecessary evil. It is on these reasons, that men have agreed to lay aside the custom of their ancestors, in the manner of treating the vanquished in war ; and, by that uninterrupted communication, which a general spirit of commerce has introduced, the unfriendly prejudices which one man used to entertain of another, from the accidental circumstances of not being born in the same part of the globe, in the same city, or on the same spot of ground, is greatly and happily diminished. But these, with an almost universal abatement of that spirit of persecution, which used to harass the more religious ages of the world, are, I think, the only points on which the so much boasted civilization and progress of improvement turns : how far these improvements

ments may, in their consequences, tend to the general enlightening the understandings of mankind towards a cultivation of their rational interest, remains yet in the secrets of futurity ; for, surely, no real and universal melioration of the state of morals can reasonably be expected, whilst men are fettered with illiberal prejudices : but though these circumstances may, probably, lead to the attainment of that wisdom on which the excellence and happiness of man depends ; yet they never can be considered as an attainment of the principle itself.

It is true, that men have agreed to spare one another, for the considerations of mutual security, when no interest tempts them to cut one another's throats : yet are wars less frequent than they were of old ; and does a sentiment of justice forbid the carnage of the human race, when interest prompts and opportunity gives the word ? It is true, that merchants and travellers converse together freely and without molestation, in almost all the known parts of globe : but are public trusts less abused ; are public offices held with greater integrity than in former times ; has such an improvement in the laws, manners, and the police of

of modern societies taken place, as to spread those advantages of opulence and plenty, which commerce furnishes in a manner as shall be sensibly felt by all their citizens; is the right of property in the persons of our fellow-creatures given up; or are slaves less abused? When treachery, interest, and impunity are found in union, are the transactions of private life, even among the more elevated classes of men, more fair and honourable; have we fewer executions; have we fewer lawyers; have we fewer debauchees; are the enormities of vice decreased; or rather, as one vice decreases, does not another gain ground; does not gaming, and a senseless dissipation assume the place of a more general ineptitude; have we not an increased, though, perhaps, a more refined sensuality; do not the triumphs of a senseless vanity often overpower all considerations arising from the sentiments of justice and benevolence? In short, have we fewer illicit desires; or are illicit desires more rarely gratified; do we feel less the stings of envy; or are we less actuated by that passion; or have we more charity, in the extensive sense of the word, than formerly?

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If these queries cannot be fairly answered in the negative, I think the present times have no reason to boast of having made any progress in that higher part of civilization, which affects the rational interest of man, and constitutes the excellence of his nature: as for that spirit of toleration, which is happily prevailing all over the world, its growth, I am afraid, arises not from an improvement of religious principle, but from the total loss of it.

This is, perhaps, obviously the case with a neighbouring society, whom a temporary policy has rendered conspicuous in the ways of modern refinement; but for my countrymen, I wish there was not too much reason to lament, that they have rather gone in a retrograde than in a progressive course, as to the article of civilization, when compared with the virtue of ancient times. There has, undoubtedly, existed in the fortune of this nation several unfavourable circumstances which have tended to a general depravity in its morals. The insolence which too commonly attends success; the prodigality and dissipation which accompany riches, with certain corruptions interwoven with

with its government, has produced, in the point of national reputation, the most mortifying consequences ; and, though it is proper to avoid the mixture of political reflections in a moral treatise, yet it must be acknowledged, that the annals of this age have a shameful tale to tell of a certain people, who have incurred the most humiliating losses and disgraces, by scandalous deviations from all the plainest rules of justice and good policy.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.*Observations on Dr. King's Origin of Natural
Evil, tending to prove the Immutability of
Moral Truth.*

IT is too derogatory to the character of the Divine Being, to allow that such observations on the nature of man as have been advanced by Hobbes and Mandeville, and other writers of this class, have any authority, in fact; therefore, dismissing such opinions as are founded in error or malignity, we shall look for the causes of the steady depravity in human manners, and the continued prevalence of moral evil, which has been set forth in the preceding chapter, in circumstances altogether independent of any such fixed and irreclaimable principle of vice in man, as has been dogmatically asserted by the tribe of misanthropical writers.

If there is any immutability in truth, i. e. if there is any such opposition in the nature of things as truth and falsehood, this consequence will follow, that as far as we de-

deviate from the first principle, we must in the same proportion be in union with the other: now as error, by which we understand a false conception of the nature of those objects which are presented to the understanding, by the medium of the senses, naturally misleads the judgment in its determinations on good and evil; so it will be found, that any degree of misconception on the subject of those fixed and unalterable principles, on which the truth of religious and moral sentiment is founded, must lead us into such a labyrinth of error, as will necessarily bewilder the judgment, in a manner as to render the science of morals rather a field of sceptical uncertainty than the unerring guide to that wisdom and knowledge, which is requisite to the full attainment of the empire of reason.

Of all those prejudices which have acted the most forcibly against the attainment of that desideratum in human knowledge, mentioned by Mr. Locke, viz. the fixing moral truths on such grounds of apparent certainty, as shall render them capable of as clear a demonstration as mathematical problems, superstition will be found, on examination, to be of the most hostile kind,

and to have given the greatest advantages to those enemies of peace and order, who, under the plausible guise of liberal sentiment, and a more enlarged understanding of the nature of abstract knowledge, have introduced a general scepticism and diversity of opinion on those subjects, in which mankind have the deepest concern, and of which their interest more particularly requires a certainty of knowledge.

When a being, such as man, the mechanism of whose mind is framed of powers so various and so adverse, as often to act with a kind of hostility against each other, and whose imagination, instead of serving him, as a principle, to invigorate those sentiments which the cool dictates of his understanding produce, is often at war with that faculty, whose peculiar province it is to assist; when such a creature, as man, soars into the regions of intellectual nature, and contemplates a Being placed so infinitely beyond the reach of every inlet of his knowledge, as only to be discovered through the dim light of analogical reasoning; it is no wonder that his notions in general should be obscure and undetermined: and when he takes into consideration that dependent state

state of existence, which flows from the relation of a creature to an omnipotent Creator, it is no wonder that the impressions made on his mind, from such an absolute dependence on a Being, whose attributes, to the vulgar eye, are obscurely displayed, should excite a terror, and lead him to frame notions agreeable to the jaundiced tinct of his imagination, and altogether incompatible to such realities as can only be clearly discovered by the accurate attention of an unprejudiced judgment.

Superstition has, on these reasons, been in all ages the predominant frailty and error of man; and as one of the essential evils which attend such a frailty, must be the exposing him to fraud and artifice, it is no wonder that designing individuals should, from time immemorial, have played on his credulity, and, by enlarging his ill-grounded apprehensions, have brought him under such a state of subjection as was necessary to the creating an interest sufficiently powerful to evade, and set at defiance the industry of philosophical research.

Though the toleration of the magistrate on the subject of religion, in pagan societies, has been strongly asserted by some modern

writers ; yet it must be apparent to every one, who will take the pains to examine the records of ancient history, that not one of those philosophers, who were the most popular and had the largest number of followers, ventured to make public the notions which they had entertained concerning the unity and the attributes of the God-head, in a manner as to oppose that multifarious polytheism, which was for so many ages the almost universal religion of mankind ; and thus, the worship of a herd of divinities, whose moral qualities were of a kind, as are only to be observed in the worst of the human species, prevailed in every quarter of the globe, till God thought proper to reveal himself in a manner, and with an authority, as in a small term of years almost extinguished paganism, and put an end to that monstrous system of impious bigotry, under whose domineering sway almost all the nations of the world had long been subjected.

The unity of the Deity thus established ; and the perfections of his nature thus revealed, in a manner as to give the strongest support to those truths, which the eye of reason had been enabled faintly to trace ; it was to have

have been imagined, that superstition would have lost entirely the empire she had gained over the deluded mind of man, and that the empire of Christianity would have set him free, through all eternity, from her baneful influence; but experience shewed her to be of such an hydra nature, that error succeeded extinguished error; the irradiating influence of the Gospel light gradually diminished; superstition gained the ground she had lost on the first promulgation of revealed religion; new ecclesiastical tyrannies were erected; the new religion received a strong tinct of ancient bigotry, and the God of the Christians, in many respects, is at this time represented in colours more derogatory, in point of moral perfection, than the representation of those various idols who received the adoration of the pagan world.

In what manner, and by what means, the corruptions of Christianity began their progressive course, to that height of fanatical and bigotted absurdity, to which they have arisen, is a digression not at all pertinent to the matter of this treatise; and I shall here conclude these observations, with this leading position, that every misconception on

the subject of the Divine Attributes, and in particular those of the moral kind, must involve the mind in such confusion on the nature of moral truths, and the relative duties which the creature man owes to his Creator, and to his fellow-associates, in this stage of existence, as to form one of those many insuperable difficulties which have hitherto prevented the fixing moral truths on such a firm basis of certainty, as is necessary to engage the mind of man to a proper attention to that rational interest which forms his sovereign good, and from which alone, he can ever attain happiness in every probable stage of his existence.

When we behold a system of creation, where beauty and utility harmonize in a manner as to proclaim it the work of an architect endued with infinite power and infinite benevolence, we consider it as a paradise properly adapted to the support and the enjoyment of an almost endless variety of sensitive beings; but when we find, on experience and reflection, so large a portion of natural and moral evil mixed with all the felicities to which the inhabitants of this spacious globe are rendered,

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by their adapted capacities, capable of enjoying; when we find evil overflowing, in a manner, as to embitter every draught of pleasure, with so large a portion of pain and sorrow as totally to exclude, during the course of a short existence, the blessing of an uninterrupted happiness, we are struck with the surprising phenomenon; and thus, the cause and source of moral and natural evil has been the object of inquisitive enquiry, from the first dawn of speculative reasoning to the present period of time, when the cultivation and maturity of the human understanding is supposed to have attained to its acmé of perfection.

How came the beneficent giver of so many rich and valuable gifts, to suffer mental and bodily disease; how came he to suffer guilt, remorse, and all the numerous train of evils which accompany sin and death? Thus to deform his works, and to mingle themselves in such a manner with all the benefits he has bestowed on his creatures, as to render it a doubtful question among some, whether the terrestrial globe was created with a benign intention, or whether it was designed as a prison for the confinement and punishment of crea-

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tures, who, in a pre-existent state, have been guilty of the enormous crimes of revolt and rebellion, is a question which continually occurs, but which continually deludes the anxious curiosity of the inquisitive enquirer.

It is known, that the sages of the East, by a kind of metaphysical machinery, if such an expression may be permitted on the subject of intellectual existence, endeavoured to account for moral and natural evil, by the divided empire of two first principles in nature; the one a benevolent, and the other a malevolent being, who, after a long strife in which power was so equally balanced as to exclude every hope of victory on either side, amicably agreed to the expedient of a kind of united government over the intended creation; and thus, argued these wise sages, is this strange phenomena explained: for it can never be the portion of any created being to drink the cup of felicity without a certain proportion of evil, proceeding from that equal balance of power enjoyed by the opposite principles, and supported by the rigid dictates of fate and necessity.

Besides,

Besides * this system of theology, another opinion also generally prevailed in the East, that there were other intelligences of a less perfect nature than that of the Supreme Divine Mind, which had been produced, by way of emanation, from the great original ; and that other intelligences, less and less perfect, had in like manner proceeded from them : that all spirits, whether demons, or the souls of men, were of this divine origin ; and it was supposed, by some of these speculatists, that even matter itself, which they considered as the source of all evil, had in this intermediate manner derived its existence from the Deity † ; these opinions gradually spread into the western world, whose philosophers also endeavoured to account for the source of moral and natural evil on a different system of speculation, viz. that the production and the government of the world had been consigned to the care of Deities, of such an inferior nature as to

* Priestley's *Corruptions of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 25.

† This appears to be the way that Plato accounted for the origin of evil ; for he says, that it sprung from the rash and disordered spirit which heated and animated the first matter, before God, by forming the world had rendered it capable of order and harmony by an understanding. Dacier's *Life of Plato*, vol. i. p. 127.

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partake of many of the grossest of human frailties * ; and thus, argued they, it is no wonder that we experience a continual series of misery, disappointment, and vexation, when the confusion which ever must attend on vice and folly, is mixed in the first order and direction of things. It was from this erroneous theology that human sacrifices, with sacrifices of an inferior nature, and all the costly pageantry of pagan worship were zealously offered to appease and to gain the good-will of Deities who had lusts, passions, and appetites to gratify †.

Though the Gospel revelation opened a field of speculation to man, which might, by a candid and unprejudiced investigation

* This opinion is grounded on the Platonic system of philosophy, though it does not exactly agree with this system as to the imperfections of these inferior agents, who were the ministers of God in the production and government of the universe. The opinion mentioned in the text, however, formed the religious faith of the emperor Julian, and of most of the pagans who were the contemporaries of this emperor.

† According to the philosophy of Plato, the air is filled with good and bad genii, which are entirely opposite to each other ; this occasions an immortal combat, and requires a continual attention on our part ; the gods and the good angels are ready to help us, for we are their possession. *The Life of Plato*, by Madame Dacier, vol. i. p. 410.

of

of the question, have led him to conclusions of a more satisfactory kind than any which had yet been formed on this important subject, yet so strongly did present sufferings, the terror of a remoter destiny, and the prejudices of established opinion prevail over the faith of the reformed, that even among the first Christians there were some who adhered to the opinion of an evil principle, whose powers were sufficient to support at least a temporary empire of evil; and even the orthodox faith admitted an evil principle, though with a power subordinate to the decrees of the Deity. On this hypothesis, the calamities of the human race are supposed to flow from the malignant spirit of the banished angels, and the fall of the first pair, from a state of innocence and happiness, with the consequent sufferings of their posterity, are ascribed to the successful wiles of Satan, the leader of the rebellious crew.

In answer to the hypothesis of two principles on which the Manichean system is grounded, it has been very well observed *, “That the supposition of an absolute and

* King's *Origin of Evil*, vol. i. p. 105, note 15.

infinitely

infinitely evil principle, is an express contradiction; for as this principle opposes and resists the infinitely good principle; it also must be independent and infinite; it must be infinite or absolute in knowledge and power; but the notion of a being infinitely evil, is of one infinitely imperfect; the one of these beings then is absolutely perfect, or enjoys all manner of positive perfection; and consequently the other, as it is directly the reverse, must be purely the negation of it, as darkness is of light; thus this evil principle must have knowledge and power, in order to make opposition to the good one: but as he is directly opposite to the good and perfect one, he cannot have these attributes; therefore the supposition of such an existence as this implies a contradiction."

The system of theology which prevailed in the western world, is so entirely exploded, that any refutation of it would be a childish and impertinent digression; and in regard to the operation and influence of such an evil principle as is admitted in the Christian system, though such an admission must be allowed to accord with the literal sense of the text; yet, as the language of Scripture is acknowledged to be

be metaphorical and figurative, it may be erring on the safer side to suppose, that the influence of the passions and the lust of appetites is represented under the figure of an evil principle, continually at work to undermine the innocence and deprave the virtue of the human mind, rather than to adhere pertinaciously to an interpretation, which gives room for the scoffer to ask, why an omnipotent and infinitely wise Being should permit one order of his creatures to abuse their superior powers in a manner as to ensnare and draw into the train of perdition, other of his creatures of an inferior rank; for this seems to infer a notion more derogatory to absolute moral perfection than the Manichean system; for that supposes an impotence in power, rather than in benevolence or wisdom in the good Deity.

These different solutions of that difficulty in metaphysical reasoning, which arises from the phenomena of natural and moral evil, not having been founded on suppositions sufficiently probable to appease the anxiety, or satisfy the curiosity of the inquisitive mind, every modern, moral, or religious treatise teems with remarks on this interesting subject; new solutions have been attempted; and this century, which, above all others,

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has been prolific of novel speculations, has produced several publications in which this clue of complicated difficulty is pretended to have been unravelled, and the gordian knot fairly untied.

Of these modern writers, Dr. King, archbishop of Dublin, has made the boldest attempts in metaphysical knight-errantry, and has maintained an unrivalled reputation, both in the opinion of the divine and the philosopher.

The intrinsic value of this famous work, and whether it is calculated to remove those difficulties which the phenomena of physical and moral evil has hitherto raised in the investigation of the moral attributes of God; and, consequently, on the fixing moral truth and religious hope on a firm basis, will be part of the subject of the ensuing pages; because, as it has been already observed, every error in this important point of speculation, is attended with consequences of the most fatal kind.

In order to stop all impertinent queries on any of those difficulties which arise from the agreement or disagreement of this phenomena with the moral perfections of the Divine Being, and the rule of eternal right, which so greatly puzzled the ancient world, Dr. King sets out with a dogmatical denial of

of that catholic opinion, in the creed of the moralist, viz. a necessary and essential difference of things, a fitness and unfitness, a proportion and disproportion, a moral beauty and a moral deformity, an immutable right and wrong, necessarily independent of the will of every being created or uncreated, explained by the philosopher Plato under the form of everlasting intellectual ideas, or moral entities, coeval with eternity, and residing in the divine mind; from whence, by irradiating rays, like the emitting of the sun-beams, they enlighten the understanding of all those intellectual beings, who, disregarding the objects of sense, give themselves up to the contemplation of the Deity *; whilst modern philosophers, in a lower strain of reasoning, assert an abstract fitness of things perceived by the mind of God, and so interwoven in the nature of contemplative objects, as to be traced like other abstract truths, by those

* 'Tis not reading of books, says this philosopher, which will communicate this great knowledge, it must be attained by profound meditation, and every one must for himself draw this celestial fire from its true source, for by this union with its object, a divine flame is kindled on a sudden, as from a fire which spreads itself round, illuminates the mind, and feeds and preserves itself therein.

facul-

faculties of the mind which enable us to compare and perceive the agreement and disagreement of our sensitive and reflex ideas.

Dr. King, after having thus at one stroke stripped the Deity of the glorious attribute of wisdom, for of what use is wisdom, and in what manner can it be exercised, if there is such an absolute indifference in the nature of things as to leave no grounds for judicious election? having thus, I say, stripped the Deity of wisdom, and reduced the attributes of God to those of a physical nature, accompanied with a kind of intelligent mechanical ability, he proceeds to establish moral good and evil on the footing of will, dependent on the pleasure of God, and to be read by man through the medium of suffering and enjoyment; that is, according to the Doctor, the moral colour of actions take their complexion solely from their consequence; and thus, if there was no punishment, there would be no vice *.

After having thus magisterially discarded every principle in ethics, which can war with his hypothesis, the author, as if he

* These notions of Dr. King agree exactly with the opinions of Epicurus on the nature of moral Evil. had

had been the first counsellor to Omnipotence, proceeds to give an account of those effects of second causes which go under the denomination of evil. He first sets out with allotting a certain portion of space for the universe; and, after having filled it with as great a number of superior natures, in a kind of necessary gradation as a limited system would bear, he comes to this globe of earth, and to that lowest link in the chain of intellectual nature, man, whom he supposes to have been placed at the head of the terrestrial creation; because the place allotted for his existence was not adapted to the enjoyment and support of those higher ranks of being, who form the chain of the exalted part of gradation.

But why, says the caviller, was this terrestrial globe denied advantages adapted to the entertainment and support of beings endued with higher powers, whose happiness would have been highly exalted, and the evil complained of avoided, if such an alteration in the system had taken place? No, says the author, this was not in the plan of Providence: that which is constituted beauty, harmony, and perfection, by the will of the divine Mind, consists of this very gradation and subordination

nation of the several parts of the universe, of which you complain. It is necessary for the preservation of this harmony, and, perhaps, for the advantage of the superior parts in the structure of the universe, that this globe, whom you represent to be so fruitful of evil, should be just as it is.

A necessity arising from the order and frame of the universe being thus established, we come to treat of that natural evil which has furnished so many specious cavils against the power or the goodness of God. Know then, that what you call evil, is not real evil, but only some want of a greater good, and ought to be termed only a defect: if man is not so perfect as the consciousness of his frail nature, and the powers of his imagination, soaring into the regions of intellectual excellence, prompt him to desire, it is because, that every place in the universe, adapted to the enjoyment and support of more exalted beings, is already full. The terrestrial globe was necessary to complete the harmony and the perfection of the proposed system of creation; and such a creature as man, is a necessary link in the chain of gradation. It was benevolent of God to give sensitive existence on any terms, because sensitive existence,

existence, in the simple sense of the word, is a blessing, which indeed may be diminished, by its being accompanied with suffering; but which no supportable sufferings can destroy, and when sufferings are insupportable, they necessarily put an end to existence. Now, continues the author, God having, in the creation of the human species, bestowed the benefit of rational existence to as many of his creatures as the limited space of the terrestrial globe could maintain, he willed to bestow the benefit of sensitive existence on animals of an inferior nature; and as man is constituted in a manner to be better nourished by animal than by vegetable food*, in giving the blessing of sensitive existence to these inferior natures, he wisely provided for the support and assistance of man; and thus in the divine œconomy, we see every part of limited space as full of animated existences, as the nature of limitation would admit: as for the evils of sickness, pain, and natural death, which attend on the whole animal

* It is to be observed, that in the example of the Gentoos, we find human existence well nourished and supported without animal food, and the strongest of the brute species, viz. oxen are nourished with a vegetable diet.

creation, we may find their causes in the stubborn nature of matter, and those turbulent properties which are necessary to render it useful in the œconomy of nature, and to serve those various purposes which the effects of motion and counter-motion produce, and for the violences committed on the brute creation, and all those tremendous and painful modes of dissolution, to which they are exposed by their entire subjection to man, and the use made of them for his enjoyment, nourishment, and support. This cannot be called an evil; for sensitive existence must always be a blessing, however short its duration and painful its extinction; and they have no reason to complain of being made sacrifices to the use of creatures of a superior nature for every other place being full in the universe, they could have had no existence at all, but under the regulation of these laws.

The first objection which arises from a rational investigation of this curious hypothesis, is the introducing of an uncertainty on the nature of virtue; and by taking away the essential and eternal discriminations of moral good and evil, of just and unjust, and reducing these to arbitrary productions of the divine will, or rules and modifications

tions of human prudence and sagacity, it takes away one regular, simple, and universal rule of action for all intelligent nature; and thereby weakens those hopes of man, and that prospect of retribution and ultimate happiness, which receive their strongest support from the immutable nature of justice, and a determinate idea of this principle in the divine character.

The second objection to be made to this hypothesis is, that it is highly derogatory to God to represent him as forming the creation, not for the only end which appears suitable to his moral perfections, viz. the bestowing happiness on sensitive existence; but the rendering this end in a manner subordinate to a motive of a very inferior nature, a certain kind of self-gratification arising from the exertion of infinite intelligence and power, in the forming a complete system of creation, as far as it respects the principles of symmetry and harmony, on which the perfection of beauty is supposed to depend, and sacrificing to this end all that moral excellence which lies in the benevolent consideration of bestowing on all ranks of sensitive beings every happiness, of which their nature is capable.

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And, thirdly, it seems to weaken that notion of irresistible power, which forms one of the most exalted attributes of the Deity, viz. such a sufficient capability as is superior to every obstacle, but what implies a positive contradiction.

One of those writers, who has taken great advantage of the author's hypothesis to support the probability of sceptical doubts on the subject of future rewards and punishments, and on those exalted expectations which are founded on the immutable justice of God, asks whether there could have been such a moral entity as the abstract notion which we frame of justice, if there had been no rational existences created, or if these had been endowed with such independent natures, as to have had no relation to each other? To which we answer, that, according to Mr. Locke's observations on the power of the mind in framing abstract ideas, complete ideas of this kind may be framed, if there were no archetypes in nature corresponding to them. If, says he, an idea could have been framed of homicide, the same as we have now of it, the idea would have been just, though no homicide had ever been committed; so the nature,

ture, complexion, and reality of justice and injustice, would always have been the same, if the Almighty had never brought into existence any rational beings, whose mutual relation required the exercise and operation of this moral rule; and even if the creation of such independent natures as had no relation to each other, had been in the divine economy, this principle of justice and injustice must have operated in such a manner, as to have given its different essences to the actions of the Creator to the creature, according as such actions corresponded to one principle, or the other: the same may be said of benevolence, and its contrary principle, cruelty; the same may be said of gratitude and ingratitude; of piety and impiety, if there had been no relation between a creature and a Creator: the same opposition would also have existed in the comely and the uncomely, in propriety and impropriety, and in all those modes of moral differences which take place in the conduct of man, and which particularly respect his nature, his circumstances, and the relative situation in which he is placed to the different inhabitants of the terrestrial globe; although it must be grant-

ted, that such rules of rational action must have lain dormant in that universal chaos which took place before the creation.

Of those who make the definition of moral good and evil to consist entirely in doing that which does, or may produce, natural good or evil to ourselves, or others ; and, in particular, on the subject of archbishop King's position, that the moral colour of actions, take their complexion solely from their consequences ; we ask whether inebriety and gluttony, provided the particular constitution of the person who practised such an intemperance, was of a nature not to be any ways affected by it, would not be blameable, and consequently immoral ; and whether certain unnatural gratifications of appetite, which were allowed by some of the pagan philosophers in some instances, because they do not appear to have a direct tendency to disturb the happiness of society, or to bring natural evil on any individual, are on this account to be placed in the list of innocent actions, that is, actions void of the stains of moral turpitude ?

The supposition that a certain self-complacency, arising from the contemplation of the beauty and excellence of his work, independent

dependent of a benevolent end in the creation, is very derogatory to God, and a very unsatisfactory manner of accounting for that gradation in the scale of beings, which we perceive to take place through all animal creation on the terrestrial globe, and which we presume, by analogical reasoning, to be observed in the economy of all intellectual existence, from the intelligent creature man, up to an order of beings, endowed with as high a perfection of nature, as infinite benevolence could bestow on that which is dependent and created.

The question, therefore, whether it was more agreeable to infinite benevolence to create all creatures as perfect as the nature of a created being is capable of, will admit of a more satisfactory answer, than that such a gradation is necessary to that harmony which the divine Mind conceived to form the beauty of his system. God undoubtedly intended to bestow on all his sensitive creatures the greatest possible happiness that their natures are capable of receiving; and the harmony, therefore, of such a gradation, is a subordinate cause to the intended benevolent effect: nor can it be supposed, that such a benevolent intention can

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be an inferior consideration in the divine mind. No; the more probable reason to be assigned for such a gradation, because more correspondent to the ideas of perfect wisdom and perfect benevolence, is, that a being produoed in the highest degree of natural perfection, which a creature is capable of, and still preserving the same excellency, will not enjoy as much happiness in the main, as if he was placed in a much inferior state at first, by which he becomes capable of experiencing a perpetual accession of unknown pleasures, whereby the blessings he enjoyed in his pre-existent state, by a comparative view are made to add a superior relish to the present more advantageous state, and thus enables him to enjoy a continued series of fresh satisfaction and new delights, whilst he is continually approaching nearer and nearer to that perfection, the excellency of which he has been thus taught to prize, and to relish a supreme good by that rule of comparison, whereby we learn to estimate the worth of all possessions; and as finites, however amplified, can never reach infinity or absolute perfection, so some enraptured imaginations have set no bounds to the inexhaustible power and goodness of God. The blessings of a growing happiness is a notion

notion which has been embraced both by the divine and the philosopher, and is described in glowing colours by Mr. Addison, in his *Spectator*, No. III.

“ There is not in my opinion,” says this emphatical writer, “ a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion, than this of the perpetual progress the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period to it. To look upon the soul as going on from strength to strength; to consider that she is to shine for ever with a new accession of glory, and brighten to all eternity; that she is still adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; carries with it something wonderfully agreeable to that ambition, which is natural to the mind of man; nay, it must be a pleasing prospect to God himself, to see his creation for ever beautifying in his eyes, and drawing nearer to him by degrees of resemblance.”

When we come to a *ne plus ultra* in any chain of reasoning, we are apt to have recourse to some arbitrary principle, which like the magic wand of an enchanter, subdues every obstacle in the way of victory: thus, when a speculatist, in treating on the phe-

phenomenon of evil, has used the ordinary weapons of argument with an imaginary success, when he comes to a difficulty of such a gigantic size, and insuperable nature, as to threaten the total overthrow of his hypothesis, he has recourse to his magic wand, and boldly asserts, that the power of God is not so positively omnipotent and unlimited as to subdue to his will and pleasure every obstacle which may arise in the nature of things. And though that principle in the universe, which we call matter, is allowed, by all orthodox philosophers, to be one of the creatures of God; yet, according to these reasoners, he could not have moulded it in a manner, or endued it with such harmonizing properties, as might correspond with sensitive creation, in such a way as to avoid the evils which are supposed necessarily to flow from its turbulent powers, and contrariety of action and re-action: thus, the difficulty is at once solved, the gordian knot untied, all inconsistencies are removed, and the speculist proceeds to complete his hypothesis with that self-complacency which accompanies every author, who believes he has thrown new lights on a subject hitherto regarded

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as one of those mysteries in the divine œconomy, which eludes the search of human enquiry.

As the senses are the only inlets to human knowledge, and the objects of sense the foundation of all human reasoning, the notion we have framed of divine omnipotence, arises from that variety and opposition of effects which we observe to take place in the operations of nature.

If we attentively consider the œconomy of all the animal and vegetable creation, it must necessarily produce a conviction of the unlimited power of God, and the facility with which he harmonizes and modifies matter, in a manner as to produce in different creatures the most opposite effects; and thus, by a very judicious display of omnipotence, he confirms the belief of the attentive mind, and produces that implicit confidence necessary to the support of religious sentiment, and to those hopes which equally depend on his acknowledged attributes of perfect power and perfect wisdom.

On the subject of vegetable nature, let the botanist stand forth, and declare that unlimited power, by which the element earth is endued with properties fitted to nourish

nourish and to give being to existences, with a lavish and almost endless variety; beings whose distinct and unsimilar properties are experienced, by the opposition of their action, on animal nature, and by those contrary effects produced on the visual orb, and on the organs of taste and smell.

If we examine the insect tribe, what variety and contrariety do we observe in the nature of these animals; nay, what a variety and contrariety of nature do we find at different stages of existence in the same animal: at first the grub, as if it sought to conceal from the inquisitive eye of man, and from the ravenous appetite of inimical animals, its helpless and unseemly form, hides itself in the bosom of that earth from whence it first drew its existence; then, if it escapes from all the dangers which threaten its impotent state, it assumes a less degrading form; and at length benevolent nature, as if repenting for having played the step-mother in these first stages of this poor insect's existence, recompences it with the gift of such an inviting beauty, as often becomes the means of its destruction, and from being confined within the bowels of the

the earth, it delights itself in the regions of light, sips the most luscious sweets of vegetable nature, and enjoys, with the more noble animals of the winged race, the pleasures of aerial exercise.

If we proceed, and take a survey of those more noble animals of the winged race, we shall also observe, in the œconomy of their natures, the same principles of variety and contrariety; would not the sceptic, who denies even the probability of a future state of existence to the frail nature of mortal man, assert, did not the phenomena of nature produce an incontrovertible instance in the swallow species, would not he assert, that it was beyond the power of God, and altogether repugnant to the established and necessary laws of nature, in animal organization, for a creature to lie in such a state of insensibility as to carry the appearance of a dissolution of those properties which sustain animated nature, and then, after the term of several months, to experience a kind of annual resurrection; and thus, through the whole course of its existence be first annually reduced to a state of insensibility; and in this state, contrary to all the established laws of nature, which

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take place in other animal organization, be supported without food during the dearth and barrenness of the winter season, and then be revivified in that returning period of the year, when prolific nature produces a lavish plenty for the support of all her children?

To proceed in our survey of that variety and contrariety in the principles of created existences, which declare the glory and power of God, how various, how complicated, are those instinctive economies, by which all the brute species, the feathered and the insect tribes of animals sustain, support, and defend the boon of life, and how they provide for the necessities of their young during the impotent stage of their existence: what can be more contrary and opposite in principle than the strength of the lion and the feebleness of some of the brute tribes? What can be more opposite and contrary than the sharp sight of the lynx, and the blindness of the mole? Yet supple and indulgent nature adapts herself as well to the infirmities of the one, as to the higher perfection of the other. If we attend to the principle of procreation, we may observe a limitation, almost to barrenness in some,

some, whilst others, who, by a more pitiable fate, are assigned the prey of superior animals, or are rendered subordinate to some other useful purposes in the creation, are prolific to a very high degree.

But if we pass from earth to water, and survey the finny tribe, here a new world of wonders discloses itself to the attentive and inquisitive mind: here we shall find the peculiar structure of animal creation, adapted to an element, so hostile to the earth born-race as to be incompatible with all the principles of their existence; and here we shall find nature displaying her powers, as in the children of earth, in an almost endless variety of different magnitudes, of different shapes, and of different powers, as to procreation, and the qualities on which the principles of offensive and defensive war is sustained. The difference between a whale and the smallest of the finny tribe, is as prodigious as between an elephant and the smallest visible insect; and the activity of the eel and the dormant and almost insensible state of oyster existence, is as great a contrariety as the imagination can form; yet are the different organizations and powers of every genus

and species of animal creation complete in their several natures, and adapted to sustain all the difficulties to which they are exposed, by the arrangement and modifications of animated and unanimated matter.

An attentive survey of these various and contrary effects, produced by unlimited power, will convince the judicious mind, that the pain, sickness, and consequent mortality of any of God's creatures, depends on his will, and on a providence directed perhaps with a benevolent intention, to all; and that the same omnipotence exerted in the support of animal existence, against all the conflict of jarring elements, through any period of given time, might have supported it through all eternity; that is, that matter might have been so modified as to have conduced rather to the support of life than to be inimical to its preservation; or that the structure of animal organization might have accorded in such a manner, with the action and re-action of its opposite motions as not to have been affected by them; and, indeed, Dr. King is obliged to allow, that God can alter or suspend the laws of creation, when

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he instances the state of the first pair before their fall from innocence and obedience.

Though an accurate survey of the phenomena of nature, it is to be imagined, would fill the mind with a very exalted, if not a comprehensive, idea of the power of God; yet several writers endeavour to account for the established course and order of things by a limitation of power: even the correct and judicious Lord Shaftesbury gives a very whimsical reason for nature not having bestowed wings on her favourite man: "Consider," says Theocles, in the *Moralists*, "what an alteration of form must have ensued, if nature had bestowed the gift of wings on man: observe in one of those winged creatures, whether the whole structure be not made subservient to this purpose, and all other advantages sacrificed to this single operation." The anatomy of the creature shews it in a manner to be all wing, its chief bulk being composed of two exorbitant muscles, which exhaust the strength of all the others and engross, if I may say so, the economy of his whole frame. It is thus, the aerial racers are able to perform so rapid and

strong a motion, beyond comparison with any other, and far exceeding their little share of strength elsewhere ; these parts of their's being made in such superior proportion as in a manner to starve their companions ; and in man's architect, of so different an order, were the flying engines to be affixed, must not the other members suffer, and the multiplied parts starve their companions ? What think you of the brain in this position, is it not like to prove a starveling ; or would you have it be maintained at the same high rate, and draw the chief nourishment to itself from all the rest ?"

It is no doubt, that in the several structures of all animals, is completed the plan on which the structures are formed, and every quality and power is given to the winged race necessary to fulfill the purpose which Providence designed in their creation : but if corporeal strength is not in the nature of things altogether incompatible with the support of the powers of the mind, and to the contrary proposition, I think the male-sex will be cautious of assenting, lest it should give too great an advantage on the point of intellect to the female,

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then a stout, and even a portly, pair of legs will not starve the brain; and on this supposition it will be granted, that a large pair of wings might have been nourished with a proportional addition of food, and stronger digestive power in the stomach, without starving, or in any manner affecting, the powers of the superior parts of organization. But, in truth, there are much more weighty reasons than what can be drawn from the necessity of things to be assigned for the parsimony of nature, in those kind of gifts to man: how would it decrease his sociability, if he was made more independent on his species, by the gift of those advantages bestowed on the brute creation, necessary for their preservation in a state exposed to the inclemencies of the seasons? how would it extend violence, and enlarge moral and natural evil, if to the mischievous sagacity of man the natural strength of the lion was added? what increased slaughter of the brute creation, if his powers of devouring and digesting were enlarged? and what infinite mischiefs might he not be able to compass, if the empire of the air was added to that of the earth and the sea, and if with a velocity

equal to his strength, he could direct his flight to any part of the globe, in the pursuit of every object calculated to gratify his appetites? By such an addition of privilege, how would his temptations be enlarged; how would his honest industry be impeded; how could the robber, the murderer, and the ravisher be brought to justice; and how tremendous would be the consequences arising from the extent of his powers, in the compassing plans calculated to satisfy the exalted passions of ambition, revenge, and love?

To that part of Dr. King's observations on the phenomena of nature, which respects that principle of drawing sustenance and support from the destruction of life, which prevails through the whole line of animal creation, and which, on account of their inferiority of intellect, falls so heavy on those Beings who descend in the chain of gradation, it is to be acknowledged that the difficulties which arise on this view of the phenomena, cannot be removed but by raising difficulties equally great. For if we should assent to the position, that the blessings which accompany a sensitive existence are so great, that the untoward circumstance

of a violent and painful death, with the mental feeling attending that instinctive terror which nature has given for the purpose of avoiding evil, are not capable of overbalancing it, yet some duration is surely necessary to render existence a blessing: now as young food is pleasing to the pampered appetite of man, some of these creatures live so short a time, that they may be only said to be born in order to die*.

Other speculatists have endeavoured to account for the moral evil of war and homicide, on the position, that such an irregular extermination of being, is necessary to prevent the earth from being overstocked by inhabitants; and that the prolific nature of several of the brute tribes would reduce them to such wretchedness and want, as to cut the thread of life by a sufferance of greater misery than is inflicted on them by man, who sustains some for the service he draws from them, and whose interest it is to provide for the nourishment and support

* This is yet more observable in the fate which attends the two species of dog and cat: the greater number of the young of these animals fall a victim to convenience, before they have attained the blessing of vision.

of those whom he regards as his proper food, till the destined hour of slaughter.

The devouring of the smaller animals by the larger, and that principle of destruction which runs through the whole line of animal existence, has been endeavoured to be accounted for in the same manner: but it is surprising that it does not readily occur to the observation of the philosopher, that in the first case, if it can be supposed that the earth, even with the exertion of an honest industry, is not capable of yielding fruit enough to sustain the lord of the creation, man; such a defect must have been known to the Creator: and could he not, in a different manner, have provided for this difficulty, than by the resource of an expedient inimical to the perfection of a moral agent, in proportioning the medium of prolific power to the necessity of the occasion, since we must observe such a variation in the extent of this power in different animals, as shews that every possible different mode of it is within the extent of an omnipotent Providence?

As observations of this obvious nature, equally affect the whole line of animal existence, it must be allowed, that this part of

of the phenomena of nature lies quite out of the depth of human knowledge to comprehend; and that it is folly and presumption in the highest degree to attempt to account for it, because it never can be done in a satisfactory manner, and without raising as many difficulties as are pretended to be solved. This mystery, then, which lies involved in the established laws of nature, must ever remain an object of faith and confidence; but if it is permitted to indulge a speculation on this obscure and dark phenomena, may we not hope, may we not presume, that some district in the immense expanse of the universe, may be set apart for the entertainment of the inferior part of animal nature, where they may enjoy a larger portion of the rational faculties, and that a remembrance of their former sufferings and state of degradation may add greatly to their enjoyment, and consequently enlarge their gratitude to the Creator? Such a supposition seems to be more concordant to reason and propriety, than the pre-existent state of souls, because punishment without the consciousness of former errors, does not seem to answer any moral end, and consequently

It is to be observed, that there not having been any revelation in favour of the inferior part of animal creation, is no argument that such dispensations are not in the œconomy of Providence; for such a revelation would be useless to them in their present situation, and the letting us into the councils of God on this subject, might occasion an interruption in the intended course of things. The attempting to account for the phenomena in this manner, cannot be attended by the evil consequences, nor is liable to the objections, which load other systems and opinions; and it may tend to abate the pride, insolence, and cruelty which we harbour on the subject of those inoffensive partners in our pilgrimage, and help to induce a more Christian spirit of general benevolence and universal sympathy.

* According to human ideas, the only supposition which can make the pre-existent state concordant to divine wisdom, must be the recovery of such a consciousness and remembrance on the change of the mode of our present existence, as may unite in one point of view the actions and the sufferings of the agent in all its pre-existent states.

On Dr. King's supposition, that the enlarging of sensitive existence to every possible degree of extension, is the predominant principle in the divine plan, it is to be observed, that if this had been the intention of the Deity, independent of any superior benevolent design in such creation, all matter might have been endued with sensation; the earth might have been a sensitive existence, and have given sensitive life to all the vegetable world; the elements, the planets, and every superior and inferior part or article in the stupendous system of the universe, might have partaken of the universal gift, which, indeed, is asserted to be so general, that the water, the air, and every plant is supposed to be full of animated life, though concealed from the human eye, by the minuteness of form; but this does not militate against the presumption of a state of retribution to the larger animals, whom we have reason to think, if we may credit the informations of sense, are exposed to great misery in this vale of life: for if such a general system of resurrection as may take in all animated nature, is not in the designs of Providence, it may be concluded, that if there are any
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of the insect tribe, for whom this blessing is not intended, they may possibly be formed in such a manner, as not to be subject to that misery which bodies, whose organization correspond more with the human structure, must from the established laws of nature be subject; and that the dissolution of the very minute animals, is so suddenly effected, as to admit of no portion of pain: and thus the boon of life being unmixed with sufferings, may, however short its duration, be in this sense esteemed a blessing.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

*Observations on Lord Bolingbroke's sceptical
Opinions on the Subject of a Future State.*

THE intention of Dr. King in writing his laborious plan, to justify the ways of God to man, is undoubtedly very meritorious ; but, as Lord Shaftesbury observes, a building may be pulled down or damaged by overpropping : and the divine and the philosopher, in an over anxiety to defend the cause of religion against the attacks of sceptics, have furnished them with the strongest arguments which can be urged against a superintending Providence, and a future state ; for if our ideas of moral perfection are only modes of thinking, adapted to our human state, and framed by human intelligence ; or if of divine origin, engrafted for this purpose on the mind of man, and have no correspondence with the nature of the divine attributes ; how can we found any hopes on what we call the justice and the benevolence of God ? And if there is no portion of moral or natural evil in this world, but what is necessary in the nature of

of things, if existence is to be esteemed a blessing, however burthened with pain and misery, if the perfect benevolence of God, supposing him to have such an attribute, is necessarily limited in its effects, by an impotence in power, and the ultimate advantage of an almost infinite extensive system, by the sacrifice of the convenience and happiness of the subordinate component parts, is to be considered as a complete fulfilling to the creature what may rationally be expected from the Creator; then revelation must lose all the support which it draws from the reason of things, and stands alone on those grounds of uncertainty, which must ever attend historical evidence; on that credit which the variable complexion of faith assumes in different characters, and on those different degrees of belief or scepticism, which take their rise from the accidental circumstances of life.

It is these injudicious defenders of the mysterious ways of Providence, who have unintentionally enlarged those narrow limits, in which scepticism has hitherto ranged, to an extent which threatens the annihilation of all the sound principles of morals and religion. The unbeliever triumphs

triumphs in his new acquired strength, urges the contest, and boldly challenges the religious world to fight the battle on the grounds which they themselves have marked out ; and whilst he uses the weapons of the adversary with a commanding success, the anxious believer finds his hopes gradually decrease, and the sublime prospect of a happy eternity clouding by degrees, till at length it vanishes into the chaos of doubt and uncertainty.

Of all those who have made the most advantage of this modern manner of accounting for the origin of evil, Lord Bolingbroke stands the foremost, because he has managed the weapons of the enemy with such a skill and address, as is sufficient to impose on all those who, for want of sufficient knowledge in metaphysics, do not discern any defect in his positions ; and who, from a complete faith in their apostle, or for want of literary sagacity, do not apply themselves to trace out all his numerous inconsistencies and contradictions.

That laborious work of Lord Bolingbroke, containing five volumes in octavo, directed to the overthrow of revelation, and the hopes of futurity, is grounded on

Dr.

Dr. King's hypothesis of the origin of evil. With the doctor his Lordship perceives no evil in the world, but what is necessary, and flowing from those limitations of power, which possibilities and impossibilities create. With the doctor he devoutly explodes the doctrine of an abstract fitness of things, as derogatory to the divine character; and fixes the origin of right and wrong in arbitrary determinations of the divine will; with the doctor he supposes that harmony and universal good in the nature of things, is at war with an extensive personal happiness; and from all these premises, he draws a conclusion, that power and an independent existence are the only determinate attributes, which, from the phenomena of nature, can be ascribed to God. Having thus far gone amicably on with the divine, he at length leaves him, as a man fettered by the prejudices of education and profession, and whose conclusions are, on these reasons, at war with his premises; and he proceeds with those engines of dispute, in which they are both agreed to batter down the pile of revelation, till he leaves not one corner-stone in the building, to erect either church or temple; and having thus piously emancipated the

Deity

Deity from that kind of moral necessity, which is supposed to accompany perfect wisdom, he proceeds to take down the pride of man, by proving that he is too insignificant a part of the creation, to demand the protection of a particular providence, and that his lot, such as it is, is at least as good, if not better, than he has powers to deserve.

It is difficult to imagine that this view of things should be of so inviting a nature, as to attract the admiration of mankind; but such is the desire to be set free from the rigid rules of right, and the punishment of demerit; such is the love of novelty, and such is the fantastic ambition of embracing opinions which militate against supposed vulgar errors, that lord Bolingbroke's disciples are a growing sect. The exalted idea formerly entertained of the lot of man is generally exploded, and of such a patient nature is our modern philosophy, that we cheerfully embrace, in the harshest sense of the expression, that emphatical curse contained in the following text, " for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Every false and erroneous opinion entertained of the moral attributes of the Deity, the nature of virtue, and the grounds of future expectation, as is observed in the beginning of this treatise, must bewilder the judgment in a manner as to obstruct all improvement in the science of morals, and, consequently, in the practice of its rules. It will be necessary, therefore, to show the inconsistencies of this noble author, and expose those false grounds of reasoning which he uses against the principles of revealed religion, and on which he grounds a high probability of the positive mortality of man.

“This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

It is to be observed, that Lord Bolingbroke stands forth as a champion in the cause of the injured majesty of God, which he thinks has been impiously treated by a certain enthusiastic tribe of men, called metaphysicians, who have deluded mankind with the ideas of their over-heated imaginations, and given rise to all that fanaticism and superstition in religion, and those

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impertinent and derogatory conceits of the attributes of the Deity, which have been rendered subservient to the interests of policy, and enslaved the freedom of man under the yoke of priestly tyranny.

On this view of the subject, it is not to be expected that his lordship should give much quarter to the modes which have been used in examining into final causes, or the method of reasoning on abstract principles on the moral attributes of the Deity, and the eternal reason of things, which he condemns, as having led men into the most impious and impertinent conclusions. No, says he; we must trace God upwards, by an attention to his works, and by as close an examination of the phenomena of nature as the weak efforts of human powers and sagacity may enable us to do. After having thus prescribed the method to direct our enquiries on this sublime subject, the author proceeds to magnify the power and intelligence of the Deity, by those common observations which occur in the contemplation of the face of nature; but determines, however, that we have no reason to believe that this amazing display of power and intelligence is subordinate to

any benevolent end. A conclusion which ought not to surprise and startle us, for it is downright impiety to form any idea of God's justice and benevolence, by those complex notions which we have annexed to these words, when considered as human attributes. God is perfectly good, but it is after a manner of which we can form no conception.

Perhaps, there is not a more apposite reflection which can be made on this affirmation of his lordship's, than one which comes from the chaste and elegant pen of lord Shaftesbury. "It would be well for us, says this truly moral writer, if, before we ascended into the higher regions of divinity, we would vouchsafe to descend a little into ourselves, and bestow some poor thoughts upon plain honest mortals: when we had once looked into ourselves, and distinguished well the nature of our own affections, we should probably be fitter judges of the divineness of a character, and discern better what affections are suitable or unsuitable to a perfect being, we might then understand how to love and praise when we have acquired some consistent notion of what is laudable and lovely; otherwise we might chance

chance to do God little honour when we intended him the most: for it is hard to imagine what honour can arise to the Deity from the praises of creatures, who are so unable to discern what is excellent in their own kind.

"To praise after this manner is being sycophants in religion, and mere parasites in devotion; and indeed, to believe the governing mind not absolutely and necessarily good, and confined to what is best, but capable of acting according to mere will and fancy, is to be a demonist; for such undoubtedly there are in religion, because we know whole nations who worship a devil or fiend; to whom they sacrifice and offer prayers and supplications, on no other account but because they fear him."

To call God good, and wise, and omnipotent, without being able to comprehend the manner or the mode in which he is good, wise, and omnipotent, is, indeed, making use of terms of respect, but it is not praising either with judgment or with knowledge. For we can undoubtedly conceive what it is to be just or unjust, benevolent or cruel, but we can frame no idea of an attribute which partakes of neither of these distinctions;

therefore, in lord Bolingbroke's view of the subject, we can frame no idea which can lead us to any rational respect of the Deity. Indeed, his lordship is so thoroughly convinced of the necessity of judging the divine conduct on the principles of human ideas, that with a glaring inconsistency with what he has advanced on the impiety of metaphysicians and divines, for having taken this liberty, he makes himself a very free use of it, when he calls in question the divine legation of Moses on the massacre of the Canaanites, which, though it tended to the extinction of that inhuman and barbarous idolatry of sacrificing children to the demon Moloch, yet, his lordship observes, such a command does not square with the purest notions we are enabled to form of justice; and therefore, in a peremptory tone, he declares it to be altogether derogatory to the divine character. But here his lordship, recollecting that he has established it as a necessary principle of omnipotent power, to dispense with the laws of equity, and change at pleasure the standard of moral rectitude, endeavours to get rid of the apparent inconsistency, by asserting, that though the will of God in his own proper action,

action, in the way of first causes, cannot be circumscribed by any standard of right, or rule of equity, which we are enabled to conceive; yet it would be unbecoming his character to give any law or rule of action to his creatures, and then in contradiction to his own decrees command a violation of it.

But as his lordship does not allow that there has been any revealed will of God, how can we know, may the sceptic say, that any decree has gone forth which militates against such a command? Here his lordship has his answer ready; why, by the repugnance you find in your nature to such acts of inhumanity, with the ill consequences necessarily annexed to every act of turpitude, you may plainly read it on the face of the law of nature. But, replies the sceptic, suppose my disposition is of that stubborn reprobate kind, that I feel a repugnance to the acting by that rule, which you affirm to be read in the laws of nature; and suppose I feel no repugnance to such actions as you call violations of its laws, in what manner then am I to find out what the decrees of God are in respect to human conduct. For, as for certain, ill

consequences necessarily annexed to what you call acts of turpitude, they must either consist in remorse for some conscious ill conduct, or in some more apparent punishment, which by an invariable necessity pursues, like the shadow the substance, the violation of them ? Now if I have no repugnance, I can have no remorse ; and we see this necessity sometimes dispensed with in the uninterrupted good fortune which attends several public robbers and invaders ; and in particular in this very instance quoted by your lordship, of those same miscreant Israelites, who possessed for many years, with an almost undisturbed felicity, those lands flowing with milk and honey, of which they had despoiled the Canaanites.

How the noble author could have extricated himself from the difficulties arising from such interrogations I know not ; for he took care not to be perplexed with any impertinent observations on the nature and tendency of his speculations, by permitting them to lie dormant till after his decease. But though the attributes of God must be of a similar nature with the moral attributes of all intelligent natures, yet they must differ

in the extreme, in the degree of their perfection, from the moral attributes of the creature man. His benevolence can never be alloyed with any of the weakness of partiality, with any variability, with any of those sudden starts of high and low, which we perceive at different times and on different occasions in the affections of the most perfect of the human race, a circumstance of frailty which is owing to the mixture of other passions. Neither can it be attended with any of those passionate emotions, which, though they may be considered as amiable defects in finite creatures, is altogether incompatible with the imminutable sublimity of the divine character. His justice, or to use a more adequate term, the fixed determinations which perfect wisdom dictates, can never give way to any of those feelings, by which that useful and benign passion, sympathy, counteracts the selfishness, which, perhaps, must ever attend a finite and dependent being. And that full completion of independent happiness, annexed to his exalted state, with a freedom from the interruptions which the appetites and passions, those necessary but dangerous principles of activity in human existence, must

act to the simplifying his moral attributes, in a manner, as to allow of no mixture of contrariety.

To this reasoning, lord Bolingbroke, did he allow of the necessary connection of the ideas, would undoubtedly object to the fallibility of human sagacity, on a subject without the compass of its intelligence. To this we should reply, that the existence of a God will want a rational proof, if we deny the certainty of human ideas on abstract subjects. If, according to his lordship's assertion, metaphysical ideas have no existence but in our own mind *, how can we attempt to prove the existence of any nature elevated above the objects of our senses? But, as his lordship always declares himself to be a devout theist, he must allow us, on this interesting point at least, to exceed those narrow limits which he sometimes peremptorily prescribes; and when we have soared so high into the regions of intellectual nature as to find out the first cause, that troublesome and impertinent quality, reason, which is supposed to exalt us above our fellow-inhabitants, the brutes,

* Bolingbroke's Philosophical Works, octavo edit, vol. iii. p. 361.

will still be busy with its dictates, and oblige us to assent to a string of ideal propositions, such as the following. That the intelligence and wisdom of this Being is proved by his works; and though we are told to stop here, as the utmost bounds to which our human faculties are allowed to range, this same busy quality, reason, will never let us be at rest, but will continue to dictate to us, after the following peremptory manner. That the same faculties which assisted us in discovering the wisdom of God, will enable us to discover his moral attributes. That perfect wisdom, in our sense of things, can never be at variance with the same sense of things on the moral attribute of goodness. That God must, therefore, be perfectly good, according to the highest sense of goodness that we are able to conceive. That, by a certain necessary agreement and disagreement in the nature of things, the moral attributes of God must be of an unmixed kind. That no cause can exist in the divine Mind to give rise to those different qualities and affections, which take place in the human character. That he must, consequently, be either perfectly malevolent, or perfectly benevolent. That wisdom, benevolence, and justice

justice is, in the divine character, one and the same thing; and that, notwithstanding some untoward appearances, which in the dark situation in which we are placed, carry a mysterious countenance, yet there is so high a degree of benevolence apparent through the whole course of Providence, and impressed in such plain features on the face of the creation, that the opposite attribute of benevolence, malevolence, can never be the governing principle of the divine Mind; and by a necessary connection of ideas, if it is there at all, it must exclude benevolence, or such a mixture and diversity of attributes must be allowed, which can exist only in the frame of a dependent being, subject to that desire and aversion which attend wants, appetites, and passions. For if we can suppose, that malevolence is the governing principle in the Deity, we must, contrary to the constant course of our experience, conclude him an impotent being, that is a being deficient in power to produce the effects of his will, or so large a portion of good as is felt and enjoyed can never be the lot of his creatures.

The sceptic, who denies the moral attributes of God to be similar in any respect with

with the moral perfections of man, may be required to speak out and confess, that he thinks that cruelty is preferable to benevolence, and injustice to candour and veracity. But even to do the creature man justice, he is more malevolent from his situation than from his nature; and it is much to be suspected, from the tendency of those selfish passions which haunt this dependent state, that those who only regard virtue as a principle, convenient for general use, will discard it whenever that general interest comes in opposition to self. For why does the sceptic, who acknowledges the general use of virtue, weaken the notions of its divine origin? Why, because my reputation will be exalted, if I can prove myself superior to vulgar prejudice, and quicker-sighted into the nature of things than the most approved sages? But is not this a plain giving up the general interest for the gratification of self? For to endeavour to lower the divine origin of virtue, and reduce it into a convenient mode of human conduct, and to raise sceptical doubts on the moral attributes of the Deity, tends to deprive us of that faith which is necessary to the encouragement of our exertions in the overcoming of those

those difficulties which our frail nature has to encounter, and takes away the greatest and the most sublime pleasure which attends the exercises of the moral attributes, viz. the approbation, which the believer thinks he receives from an all-perfect omnipotent Being. What a delightful sensation attends a benevolent act on the reflection, that the increasing the happiness of one of his creatures is pleasing to God, and that such an act is a faint copy of his perfection. But, on the contrary, what a damp must it throw on all our exertions, when we believe that, after our utmost endeavours to act up to the rule of our judgment, we are only according with a system of human policy, and that our virtue is in no kind an imitation of the divine Archetype.

It is a misfortune which must ever attend an error in first principles, that it necessarily leads to some monstrous and untoward conclusion if maintained in the regular argumentative manner, or the teacher will be involved in unavoidable contradictions. Lord Bolingbroke had too much sagacity not to apprehend the consequences which must arise from an uniform denial of any similarity in the divine Attributes, to those ideas which

which human sagacity has acquired of the nature and the quality of virtue. In his attempts, therefore, to reconcile the positive mortality of man, with that adverse fortune and misery which sometimes attends virtue in this stage of existence, and that triumphant success which crowns the perverse and malevolent exertions of the wicked, He abandons the primary principles on which his argument is built; and, after the ordinary manner of metaphysicians, he proceeds to justify the ways of God on the principles of human rectitude. After a good many pleasant and acute observations on those reasoners who argue that virtue loses its reward, if it is not attended with riches and honour, and the external advantages of life, he rejects with disdain the more consistent method of Stoic reasoning, and re-assuming the speculations of Dr. King, he advances many sceptical doubts concerning the reality of human misery*, and the inequalities in regard to pain, pleasure, joy, and vexation, which human experience has allowed to exist among the sons and daughters of earth.

* Bolingbroke's Philosophical Works, vol. v. Essay first of book v.

As this is a subject which lies in too extensive a circle, and admits of too great a variety of observations to be discussed with pleasure or improvement, we shall not burden this treatise with so tiresome an investigation. Neither shall we attempt to measure, by weight and scale, those mental and corporeal satisfactions and pains, which can alone come within the comprehension of the patient who sustains them; but leaving his lordship and his disciples to the experience of their own feelings, proceed to examine other positions, which come more within the limits of satisfactory argument.

On the subject of that adverse fortune which has attended some great characters, and which to the frail and dark apprehensions of man, has appeared to carry in its train ill consequences to the general happiness of society, lord Bolingbroke has selected instances, which we have reason to believe has, in the course of God's Providence, been attended with beneficial effects, and which naturally proceeded from the corruption of man, and the flagrant abuse of temporal prosperity. The instances selected by his lordship are the fall and servitude of that flourishing common-

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wealth of Carthage, the revolution which took place in the more flourishing commonwealth of Rome, from an enviable state of liberty to the lowest debasement of servitude; and lastly, the fall and total dissolution of that enormous empire, which at one time encircled within its dominion more than half the globe.

In lord Bolingbroke's list of those popular characters who suffered in the public wreck, there are some, whom, it is reported, have not been altogether exempt from the corruptions of humanity. But as neither the usury of Brutus, nor the questioned chastity of Scipio, will serve his lordship's turn; nor yet the enormous vices of those objects of vulgar admiration, the herd of military heroes, who, after having been suffered to disturb with impunity, for a considerable time, public and private happiness, at length fell victims to justice in the pursuit of their ambition; he proceeds to call in question the fidelity of Regulus to his parole, and to brand the patriotism of Drusus with the suspicion of a factious taint.

The anecdote relating to the fate of Regulus, is found in so remote a pe-

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ried of the Roman history, that it is exposed to a variety of sceptical doubts, as to the reality of its most important circumstances. However, if we take the matter on trust, as it stands on the records of that ancient story, a principle of candour will oblige us to give such an indulgence to those prejudices, which take their rise from national sentiment, and which necessarily must act with an irresistible force in an unphilosophical age, as to command our veneration for the unparalleled fortitude of Regulus: a fortitude which, on the strength of principle, could withstand every powerful opposition arising from those untoward impressions, which the view of banishment from friends, country, and family, of torments, and of death, must necessarily make on the most heroic mind.

On the patriotism of Drusus, it must be observed, that in general the exertions of this virtue lie so exposed to inviolate cavils and remarks, that even a corresponding success, in the fortune of the most immaculate of its votaries, will hardly shield them from the attacks of envy, and the hardness of incredulity. However, in regard

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to that conclusion, which is intended to be drawn from his lordship's state of the argument, viz. the equal dispensations of Providence in the œconomy of human happiness, and the just measure of reward and punishment, as it is dealt out, in this state of human existence; though it may be acknowledged, that Brutus was an usurer, and that Cicero had imperfections, which, perhaps, are inseparable from the most exalted degree of human virtue; yet still his lordship has not answered all the objections which may be made to his conclusions. It may be asked, why that detestable hypocrite Augustus Cæsar was to be picked out as a glorious and fortunate instrument of Providence, in establishing that system of despotism, which was to serve as a national punishment for national offence, and intended as a warning to future societies, not to suffer the seeds of corruption to take so deep a root as they had taken in this devoted empire?

On the position that there is no after distribution of rewards and punishments, it may be questioned, whether it might not have been more agreeable to divine perfec-

tion, not to use the offensive word *justus*, to have made this murderer and parricide, as in the cases of the first Caesar, of Marcus Antonius, and of several of the first Roman emperors, the instrument of his own punishment; instead of suffering him, by a long and fortunate reign, and an easy natural death, attended with a great plausibility in character, to reap the fruits of a well-adapted policy. To these objections, it may be added, that though the virtue of the two Antonines was crowned with a corresponding success, yet several of the best of the Roman emperors fell victims to the lawless and interested barbarity of the pretorian guards, from the inclination they shewed, and the attempts they made, to reform the corrupt manners of the society, and to introduce some order into the wild tyranny of the government; and that some of the worst enjoyed a contrary fate. It may be added that Marius and Sylla, two of the first infringers of the laws of the commonwealth, died in their beds, whilst their less guilty followers fell victims to the ambition of their leaders. And to bring the point into the nearer perspective of domestic

tic history, it may be objected, that whilst the errors of Harrison* were punished with a cruel death, the crimes of the hypocrite Cromwell were attended with such a seeming impunity, that the parricide was suffered to enjoy his choice of empire or true glory.

On the subject of those whom his lordship acknowledges to be true martyrs to principle, he reasons thus: they suffered, says he, the necessary consequence of an over-obstinate and an over-busy zeal; and besides, it is agreeable to divine rectitude, to admit of the partial evil attendant on the undeserved sufferings of individuals, to produce a general good. These individuals were victims to the welfare of society †. This argument seems to militate against itself, because it supposes an admission of moral evil necessary to its diminution. However, when it serves a turn, we find this necessary principle in the creed of the unbeliever abandoned, and the teachers of Christianity condemned for admitting so gross a solecism

* See the author's History of England, vol. vi. 4to, p. 214 et seq.

† Philosophical Works, vol. v. p. 19. on *superstition*

in religious sentiment, as to preach Christ crucified for the universal good of the human race; because it is not congruous to any just idea of divine perfection, to permit the sufferings of an innocent being for the advantage of transgressors; although, according to the fundamental principle of this condemned doctrine, the highest reward that omnipotent power can bestow is annexed to this act of obedience and benevolence in the person of the Messiah.

On all that variety of argument and curious disquisition, which we find in lord Bolingbroke's Philosophical Works, it may be observed, that divines have given the adversary a great advantage over them in the contest, by following the enemy in all their irregular movements, and leaving that firm ground from which they could never have been dislodged. But, in order to parry the various and contrary methods in which Christianity has been attacked, they have sometimes maintained a first revelation in the person of Adam; a second, in the person of Noah; and a third, in the person of the Messiah. At other times seduced, no doubt, by the sophistry of the enemy,

enemy, and from the apprehension of calling in question the necessity for a revelation in the person of the Messiah, they have abandoned their former ground, and maintained a contrary position, by denying all previous revelation, as to a future state, in the persons of Adam and Noah; or the possibility of discovering this abstract truth, by the ordinary course and progress of human reasoning. At one time, they have insisted on the prevalence of evil in this stage of existence; the inequalities of the human lot in the portions of pain and enjoyment; the undeserved sufferings of the virtuous; the triumphant fortune of the vicious; the abused power which some of the species have gained over others; and an eternal rule of right and abstract fitness of things. And this to evince, on the principle of an eternal and invariable reason, the necessity of a future state of retribution, to perfect a plan which appears defective, when considered without relation to the whole design; but which, to be consistent with divine wisdom, must in reality be faultless, that is, without any taint of defect.

At another time, in order to show a mastery in the art of argumentative contest,

they have abandoned those strong entrenchments, which are proof against all the battery of fair argument, or the subtlest sophistry, and closed with the enemy on grounds on which they are sure to be defeated. They have denied an eternal rule of right for the government of all moral agents, rendered the wisdom of the Deity, in an exalted sense of the word, an unnecessary attribute, by denying such an independent difference of things as may give place for a judicious election: they have weakened the idea of such an exalted power annexed to the nature of the first cause, as can surmount every difficulty, which does not imply a contradiction in the attainment of those ends, which perfect wisdom must adopt: they have, contrary to those facts which the phenomena of nature ascertain, and the economy of life proves, argued, that either what is termed evil is more imaginary than a real existence, or that partial evil is necessary to a general good, because it is not within the limits of Omnipotence to produce such a benevolent effect without admitting it: and, therefore, that partial evil is not to be considered as a defect.

defect in the system of the creation, and consequently does not militate against the physical and moral attributes allowed to be necessarily inherent in the Deity.

That God should have condescended to have revealed to the first pair those two grand truths on which the purity of religious worship, a just conception of theological allegiance, and the happiness and moral conduct of man, so evidently depends; as the unity of the first cause, and a more exact distribution of reward and punishment in a future state, is undoubtedly a conduct perfectly consonant to divine wisdom and goodness. That such a revelation was repeated to Noah, and delivered down by this patriarch to his posterity, and afterwards adulterated into a multifarious polytheism by that common course of superstition, which brought in almost similar corruptions of the third revelation, in the person of the Messiah, in the church of Rome, is in a manner authenticated by the earliest records of ancient history; that is, by that general yet confused notion of these abstract truths, which prevailed in every society in the known world, but particularly in the East, where, it is supposed, the first pair

pair enjoyed the blessing of existence, and where the patriarchs inhabited.

This historical fact is allowed by lord Bellingbroke, who uses it as an argument, that the natural course of reasoning and philosophical enquiry were sufficient to discover the first abstract truth; and through the natural ambition of man to foster the last hope without the support of revelation. According to this author, from time immemorial, these opinions prevailed in the theological system, in the Theban dynasty of Egypt; and maintained their ground, though mixed with a variety of different corruptions in this society, and through all the extensive empires in the eastern world; nor does the evidence of this historical truth in any degree militate against the necessity or propriety of a third revelation, in the person of the Messiah. For either, on the opinion that these abstract truths lie level to the ordinary progress of human reason, or were made known to man by two previous revelations, it is certain, that at the period of the Christian era, that is, at that period of time when Christ came into the world, such corruptions had superstition and human policy introduced, that the light of true religion, whether arising from the ordinary course of reason, or from the

ordinary course of reason or remote revelation, was entirely obscured: and philosophy, instead of lending her aid to reform and correct the religious opinions of men, or to attempt to recover, by tracing back to its source the principle of true theology, had wantonly deviated into such wild strata of scepticism, as to bring on a general disbelief, among all ranks of men, of a governing Providence.

Of such a stubborn nature is fact, that the most determined sceptic is often obliged to admit it, though it militates against all the principles of reasoning, which he is industrious to establish. Lord Bolingbroke is obliged to confess, that it was the attention of the government to support the belief of a governing providence, a respect to the gods, and consequently an opinion that they were not indifferent observers of the conduct of men, which sustained the morals of the Roman people, and consequently which so long preserved in its original purity that political constitution, and those well adapted laws which had enlarged to such an unrivalled extent the mighty fabric of the empire. He is also obliged to confess, that it was the neglect of religion, and consequent-

by the growth of scepticism, which produced the total overthrow of perhaps the best constitution of government, taking every particular in the amount of a political system, which has ever been established in the world; so that it is hardly to be believed that

As the vast extent of the Roman empire embraced within its bounds almost the whole of the civilized world, the civil dissords which had prevailed between the parties of Marius and Sylla, of Caesar and Pompey, and afterwards between the republicans and the despotists, with the horrid massacres and proscriptions which ensued, with the triumph of disorder, vice, and wickedness, had brought on a general confusion in religious opinion. Atheism prevailed; the believer gave up the contest to the triumphant sceptic, and every principle calculated to restrain the licentiousness of unlimited power, and the excited lusts, passions, and appetites of the human race, was totally removed out of the economy of human sentiment.

On this just state of facts let the sceptic declare, whether any period of time, or exigence of circumstance, could be better adapted for the renewal of a revelation, which

tended to give life to religious sentiment, to revive the desperate state of men's minds in regard to a governing principle, to re-adjust the lost balances between duty and interest, appetite and passion, and to coerce on the reprobate world a system of religious and moral conduct by the promises and threats of rewards and punishments. If this view of things should be allowed to be consonant to reason, will the sceptic be so uncandid as not to acknowledge, that on every rational principle of argument, and on every fair statement of the question, a revelation of such a kind was necessary, and was altogether worthy of the wisdom and the goodness of the Deity?

On the second ground of argument, so weakly given up by the divine, the following statement of the question must necessarily drive the sceptic into evident contradiction, or oblige him to throw off his hypocrisy, and to confess his opinion, that there is no moral difference in the nature of things; and that perfect wisdom in the Deity does not imply perfect goodness; that the phenomena of nature display more of the principle of malevolence than benevolence; and that we worship a demon under

If there is any essential difference in the nature of things, that is, if there is any such difference as constitutes the opposite essences of good and evil, there must be an abstract fitness and unfitness, in moral entities to this difference. There must be such a proportion and disproportion in the nature of things, as square with the idea of an eternal rule of right, and form the direct oppositions of a right and a wrong. Now if there is an abstract fitness and unfitness of things, God must be capable of discerning this difference in all their due proportions; and this perfect knowledge of all abstract ideas, constitutes the perfect wisdom of God. This perfect wisdom must necessarily regulate all the volitions of the divine Mind by a rule according in the exactest manner to this abstract fitness. This constitutes the perfect and immutable benevolence of God; and a Deity possessed of such a moral attribute in its largest extent, can never willingly suffer the final misery of any being which he has created, particularly if such a being is capable of a moral agency, and conducts his life

life by that eternal rule of right, which God, in bestowing on him the high privilege of reason, has enabled him to perceive. But even the virtuous man cannot always by his virtue obtain happiness in this life, or avoid ending his short existence in a condition of misery, therefore this is a state of trial aptly fitted for the exercise and improvement of that virtue, which will find its fruition by an enlarged and more permanent enjoyment of its excellence in another state. But if there is no other state for man to enjoy the undisturbed exertion of his intellectual faculties, virtue is defrauded of its just expectations; God is not omnipotent, or he is a being physically and necessarily determined to evil, notwithstanding all those variety of effects which we perceive and experience, and which we must acknowledge can never proceed but from a cause perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness.

Thus the eternal rule of right proceeding from an abstract fitness of things, the wisdom of the Deity, his moral attributes, his omnipotence, and a future state, are so united together in one necessary chain of cause and effect that it is impossible to separate them, even in idea; and the man who doubts one of

of these propositions, must necessarily extend his scepticism to all,

The additional reasons for the rational belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, will be found in an examination of the œconomy of the human mind, the extent and nature of its faculties, the display of a benevolent principle in the Creator, and in a more exact enquiry into the nature of those dispensations of a governing providence, which according to the assertions of the unbeliever, are of a kind to square with the enlarged ideas of unlimited power, perfect justice, and perfect benevolence.

In the œconomy of the human mind is comprehended the faculties of sensitive perception, with an intuitive knowledge of certain truths, called, on this reason, self-evident; such as a perception of the difference of numbers, &c. a certain intellectual consciousness or power, by which the mind perceives the nature of its own operations, and reflects on its intellectual ideas; a judgment in perceiving their agreement and disagreement, through all the extent of possible relation and comparison; a power of generalizing and combining its ideas, in a manner as to apprehend truths of the most abstract

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stract kind; a power of memory, or calling up at will all those variety of associated and complex ideas, which result from the exertion of the fore-mentioned faculties; and lastly, a power of imagination, by which a variety of truths display themselves collectively to the perceptive faculties of the mind, and which delights itself in adjusting, with the assistance of the judgment, according to an exact criterion, every possible combination of those truths which are annexed to the subject on which it contemplates, or which, by the help of analogy, sports itself in a fanciful creation of its own forming, dresses up falsehood in a garb of truth, exaggerates and diminishes objects, and combines real and imaginary existences, in such a manner as to make a pleasant assemblage of witty and humourous images and conceits.

The faculty of sensitive perception is an inseparable quality to sensitive existence. Some degree of perception in the agreement and disagreement of ideas, some power of comparing their relations, and also some power of memory, appear to be so congenial or serviceable to animated natures, that the benevolent Author of creation has, together with the more inerring faculty of an instinctive principle, graciously condescended to bestow

them on a great part of the brute creation. These, no doubt then, with an intuitive knowledge and an intellectual consciousness, are necessary to support that rank which man holds in the chain of gradation; and to sustain and support those privileges on which his safety and well-being depend. But that power of combining and generalizing his ideas, in such a manner as to apprehend truths of the most abstract nature, with the power of memory in the large extent in which it is found in human existence, are superfluous and mischievous gifts on the principle of human mortality. For it is these powers by which man unites in one view the past, the present, and the future, and feels all those evils attendant on each different stage of time, which arise from real or imaginary sufferings from disappointed hopes, from past pleasures never to return, and all those innumerable ills which take their colour from their comparative inferiority to that ideal good which his dangerous faculties enable him to frame. These, with the power of imagination, which serves to inflame his lusts, his appetites, and his passions, and which also serves to exaggerate all the various colours of evil to a distracting height; these, I say, might well have

been spared in the œconomy of the human mind, if they had not been necessary principles of knowledge and action, to render us capable of a more enlarged and uninterrupted happiness in a future state of existence.

Had man been only created for the purpose of filling a rank on this terrestrial globe, the system of his œconomy would never have been constituted in such a manner as to have made this life a state of trial and experience: and his short day would never have been chequered with so large a portion of misery, as to render it with some a doubtful question, whether existence is worth having on such terms? That high privilege, reason, which raises him to so painful a state of superiority above his fellow-animals might have been well spared for a more useful instinctive principle, which might have necessarily led him to avoid every object of a nature and quality to bring on him pain and misery, and to pursue every one which is useful and necessary to the pleasure and the support of his existence. Had he been indued with reason, it might have been of that commanding kind as to subdue every hostile impression, and to be superior to all the seductive

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excitements of appetite and passion ; or his appetites and passions might have been balanced by so strong and over-ruling a sympathy, as to counteract, on a principle of universal benevolence, all those mischiefs which he draws on himself and others, by an inordinate and injudicious selfishness. The short space of time allotted for his existence, might, in such circumstances, have been spent with the enjoyment of health and tranquillity ; and in an uninterrupted series of pleasing sensations, neither rising into the tumults of exalted pleasure, nor changing into the rigorous anguish of pain. And, when he had finished his course, he might have quitted his existence with all that soft tranquillity which attends the state of the body when it resigns itself to the peaceful empire of sleep.

By such an œconomy of nature, existence, however short, must have been esteemed a blessing, and worthy the gift of perfect benevolence to bestow. But, in regard to those faculties of the mind, which, on a state of positive mortality, seem to have been given as a curse rather than a blessing, it is to be observed, that besides the arguments which may be drawn from this view of the subject,

ject, for a future state, the ever growing and improving faculties of the mind form another very strong conjecture in its favour.

“ How can it enter into the thoughts of man,” says the sublime Addison, “ that the soul, which is capable of such immense perfections, and of receiving new improvements to all eternity, should fall away into nothing, almost as soon as it is created: are such abilities made for no purpose? A brute arrives at a point of perfection which he can never pass, in a very few years he has all the endowments which he is capable of, and were he to live ten thousand more, he would be the same thing which he is at present. Were a human soul thus at a stand in her accomplishments, were her faculties to be full blown and incapable of farther enlargements, I could imagine it might fall away insensibly, and drop at once into a state of annihilation; but, can we believe a thinking being, which is in a perpetual progress of improvement, and travelling on from perfection to perfection; after having just looked abroad into the works of its Creator, and made a few discoveries of his infinite goodness, wisdom, and

“ A man, considered in his present state, seems only sent into the world to propagate his kind ; he provides himself with a successor, and immediately quits his post to make room for him ; he does not seem born to enjoy life, but to deliver it down to others. The silk-worm, after having spun her task, lays her eggs and dies ; but a man can never have taken in his full measure of knowledge, has not time to subdue his passions, establish his soul in virtue, and come up to the perfection of his nature, before he is hurried off the stage. Would an infinitely wise Being make such a glorious creature for so mean a purpose ? can he delight in the production of such abortive intelligence, such short lived reasonable beings ? would he give us talents which are not to be exerted, capacities which are never to be gratified ? how can we find that wisdom which shines through all his work in the formation of man, without looking on this world only as a nursery for the next, and believing that the several generations of rational creatures, which rise up and disappear in such quick successions, are only to receive the first rudiments

ments of their existence here, and afterwards to be transplanted to a more friendly climate, where they may spread and flourish to all eternity?"

On the second head of additional reasons for an existence in a future state, viz. the display of a benevolent principle in the system of creation, it is to be observed, that if we consider the frame and constitution of every sensitive being, and in particular the constitution of our own nature, we must be convinced of the goodness of that Being to whom we stand in the interesting relation of a creature to his Creator. The enlargement of the gratifications of sense in the inferior animal creation, the smallness of their wants when compared with those of the human species, with that instinctive principle by which they are invariably directed in the avoidance or pursuit of objects inimical or advantageous to their security and felicity, makes up in a large manner for the privation of the nobler faculty of reason. But in man, who stands exposed, for want of this instinctive principle, and by a more extensive combination of exciting impressions to all those miseries which an inattentive, unguarded, and inexperienced creature must

necessarily incur, what a surprising display of a benevolent sagacity do we find in the organization of his frame. At the same time that every mental and corporeal sense is gratified by innumerable inlets of those inferior pleasures, which may be indulged with impunity to the principles of life and health; those powers of gratification, which, from their mischievous nature, would, without limitations, act inimically on the body and the mind, are confined within such salutary bounds as to excite the lamentations of a Tiberius and a Messaline. It is true, that the sensations of pain are more rigorous, and are elevated into a higher tone of feeling, than the most exalted of the pleasurable kind; yet we are made capable of receiving the inferior class of pleasures from all the objects which surround us, by the inlets of some one or other of the senses, and carry about us sources of innumerable pleasures, from the affections of the mind and the powers of the imagination; and those causes by which we suffer pain do not in the nature of things often occur. Indeed, according to Dr. Hartley's observations, such is the wonderful mechanism of the human body, that, as the sensations of pleasure of all kinds

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when they are excessive, naturally run into the limits of pain ; so the vigorous sensations of pain, when they are not of a kind to destroy existence, from the same principle of excess, often fall into the limits of pleasure.

On this survey of the animal œconomy, we find sufficient reason to conclude, that God is the indulgent father of the universe ; and as his attribute of omnipotence is displayed in such a manner as to produce conviction on the mind of every accurate observer of the phenomena of nature, is it possible to agree to any other conclusion than that evil was intentionally mixed with the draught of life to produce good ; and as that good is not experienced in this life, it must rationally be expected in a future state of existence.

On the last head of additional reasons for the belief, or rather for the firm conviction of a future state, viz. an enquiry into the nature of those dispensations, which, according to the assertions of lord Bolingbroke, are of a kind to square with the enlarged ideas of unlimited power, perfect justice, and perfect benevolence ; it is to be observed, that the causes, the nature, and the apparent

apparent necessary extent of moral evil in the economy of the human system, seem to have demanded from the omnipotent and all-perfect Creator such a superintending Providence, and such an exact distribution of rewards and punishments, as to have formed a kind of theocratical government, that is such a coercion of power over the whole economy of human existence, as should have universally protected the innocent, rewarded the meritorious, and kept the flagitious and the corrupt in awe: or, if the immediate care of the terrestrial globe had been unworthy the divine Mind, its particular government might have been assigned to one of those created beings, who are favoured with a high superiority of intellectual excellence, with powers adapted to such an important end. For though it must be allowed, that virtue, or the moral law, does receive a kind of general sanction, from the consequences naturally annexed to the observation of its obligations, yet, in the course of human events, the deviations from this rule of nature are by far too numerous to admit in a positive sense, when our speculations are confined to this state of things, the general security

security of innocence, and the reward of virtue.

Does not the history of all ages, of all countries, and of all societies, furnish us with innumerable instances of this first class of moral agents, who have fallen victims to the revenge, the envy, the lust, the rage of power, and of inviting opportunity, both in public and private life: how many of this class have fallen victims to the mistakes of law, and the corruptions of judges? how many mental sufferings have not these scourges of humanity, the sword and the musket, with all the formidable and bloody artillery of war, occasioned in the breast of the parent, the child, the widow, the orphan, and in all those several relations which form the bands of social life? how many provinces have been laid waste to satisfy the mad ambition of conquest, and what a herd of mischiefs has not followed in its train, servitude, famine, poverty, and pestilence? And for that second class of sufferers, how innumerable is the list of those who have incurred, by one way or another, a martyrdom, for having directed their conduct on the rigid rule of conscience; how pitiable, how tremendous a fate has attended

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ed a conscientious fortitude, when set in opposition to the zeal of bigotry, or the interests of ambition?

But let us leave these more conspicuous traces of an ill-fated virtue and a suffering innocence, and survey the state of virtue and innocence in the more private paths of life, and in the more ordinary course of human affairs. Here the observations which we shall make on the happy tendency of innocence and virtue, to promote the felicity of those who possess these blessings, will be mixed with a variety of cases, which if they do not totally militate against this rule, must be allowed to form some exceptions to the universal extent of it. If we look into the matrimonial line, we shall find several ill-fated pairs, who seem to have been formed with such contrarities of disposition, as to embitter the draught of life, on every principle of human conduct. Here poverty, disease, intestine broils, and a capricious tyranny, often overwhelm the innocent sufferer, and disturb the tranquillity of the calmest virtue.

Even in the tender relation of parent and child, abused power on one side, and a profligate ingratitude on the other, often bring

bring grey hairs to the grave with sorrow, or provoke the last act of human despair, the unnatural violence of suicide.

These are the more glaring instances of human wretchedness; but in all the relations of life, how often do the crimes and the indiscretion of individuals bring the ill consequences of poverty, and a variety of mortifications on the innocent and the meritorious? how often, with the erroneous herd of mortals, do a few exterior graces of person supplant the most determined merit? how often is the most determined merit foiled by the fickle or the interested conduct of individuals, or the capricious humour of the multitude? what scorns and contumely does not honest poverty often sustain, whilst the flagitious knave triumphs in the abused accidents of fortune? how frequently is the innocent tranquillity of virtuous life disturbed by the hostility of incidents, which arise from the complicated sources of moral and natural evil? and besides those diseases, which the intemperance of parents bring on their offspring, there are others of the most acute and the most mortifying kind, annexed to the frail texture of human existence. The sharp and

and rigorous pains of a fit of the stone, is almost superior to the patience of the most determined fortitude; and madness, by subduing the reason of man, deprives him of every means of palliating, in any degree, this worst of human miseries.

On the subject of that general sanction which the voice of experience allows to be given to the moral law, there are instances of an interruption to this rule, and some particular dispensations of Providence in the direction of this general sanction, which evidently tend to confirm the candid and attentive mind in the belief of a future life, at least for those of God's creatures who are formed to act on the principle of a moral agency. It is allowed by that famous sceptic Mr. Hume, that the felicities of a good constitution, a gay and volatile temper, with the advantages of temporal prosperity, will secure an impunity from those stings of conscience, and that keen remorse which commonly follow the blacker acts of turpitude. And even in the general course of events, the profligate is often brought to punishment, from the circumstance of having such a mixture of virtue in his character, as shall prevent him from taking all

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the necessary means to secure the success of his schemes and pursuits ; whilst the true Machiavelian hero, according to the general course of things, triumphs in his iniquity. The wisdom of the children of Mammon is mentioned by the Messiah ; and, according to the observations of lord Shaftesbury, it is the thorough profligate knave, the complete villain alone, who can any way bid for happiness with the honest man : true worldly interest is wholly on one side or the other, all between is inconsistency, irresolution, remorse, vexation, and an ague-fit from hot to cold, a perpetual discord of life, and an alternate disquiet and self-dislike.

Another circumstance in the general direction of the sanction of rewards and punishments to the moral law, demands from its peculiar nature and its apparent tendency, to the confirmation of our belief in a future state, a very strict attention.

On that benevolent principle, which is to be traced through all those incidents of life, which, from their interesting consequences, are commonly deemed the effects of a governing Providence, especially directed to the concerns of men, we find that sorrow, disappointment, and vexation, have

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commonly so beneficial an influence in the correcting the depravity of our natures, that they go under the denomination of salutary chastisements, and are regarded by the penitent sufferer as very grateful instances of divine goodness and condescension. Now of these dispensations, which are often made in a manner too remarkable to doubt of their authority, we often find them happen to those who are possessed of many virtues, though blended, perhaps, with gross frailty and imperfection. The disposition of the sufferer is, from this circumstance, corrected in such a manner, as to drive out all that alloy which sullied his brightest virtues. But this happens at a period of his life, when the correction and improvement of his nature can be of no service to himself or others in this stage of existence; and on the supposition of a positive mortality, would be a wanton exercise of cruelty: and, indeed, to suppose that the Creator will suffer the abandoned profligate villain to finish his course in a triumphant career of success, attended with the satisfaction of a self-complacency, and to punish other of his frail, yet, comparatively, virtuous creatures, with the anguish, which

must ever be annexed to some temporal calamities, attended with the keen sensations of remorse and self-disapprobation ; is a fo-licism in theological sentiment : a solecism which with the cases already mentioned, may fall under that censure which lord Boling-broke passes on the records of the Bible: for if the moral law is to be considered as of divine authority, no kind of positive punishment can undoubtedly ensue from the observation of it in any instance ; nor can it be thought that an impunity will attend its entire violation in some of the creatures, whilst a more partial omission of its precepts is severely punished in others.

" It is to be presumed, says Dr. Hartley, that Providence exposes to our view some notorious instances of unequal dispensations, that the argument for a future state, thus deducible, may make the greater impression on us ; " and, indeed, the happiness of the creature is so congenial with every idea of wisdom and goodness which we are enabled to form in the character of the Creator ; and the contrary so annexed with an idea of malevolence, that it would not be easy for us to imagine, that the most depraved of the human species could ever arrive to such an excess of cor-

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ruption, or to have a nature so flagitiously cruel as to produce existence for a contrary end. And when we find men argue with earnestness for a negation of every moral attribute in God, on which the rational happiness of the species so evidently depends, may we not, without being deficient in the quality of candor, presume, that it is from a desire of being themselves freed from the obligations of a moral conduct.

Indeed, the natural antipathy and abhorrence of a rational creature to annihilation is so great, that it has been urged by some, as an argument in favour of the opposite opinion; and it must be acknowledged, that those who can bear the thoughts of annihilation with satisfaction, appear to be excluded, by their nature, from those rapturous pleasures which arise from the higher class of intellectual enjoyments.

The hopes of an improved nature, and a glorious immortality, has been the natural ambition of all good men; and in the person of Socrates was united with the soundest principles of philosophy. But there are some, who, with an over-nice delicacy, pretend that it argues a selfishness, degrading

to the nature of virtue, to frame any hopes, or even to form a wish, for the attainment of such an exalted happiness, as must overbalance the merit of any human exertion: But it will be found, that the truly devout and philosophical Christian puts all merit on the side of the creature totally out of the question, and only argues on that display of benevolence, which is to be observed on the phenomena of nature; and those extensive capabilities of misery and happiness, both mental and corporeal, which were given him by the Creator. And as to the charge of acting on a selfish principle, he absolutely denies the justness and the propriety of the remark, and avers that it can only respect those who have annexed a grosser idea than himself to the pleasures of a future existence, and who regard immortality as a price, for having sacrificed the pursuits of a vicious inclination for its attainment. He declares, that he loves virtue, for its own sake, and he is ambitious of the blessings of a future state, because he supposes it to consist in that improved condition of his nature as may enable him to taste its pleasures in the most exalted sense, and without any alloy of human infirmity.

Can it be thought sincerely, says lord Shaftesbury, that any man, by having the most elevated opinion of virtue and the happiness it creates, was ever the less inclined to the belief of a future state? On the contrary, it will ever be found, that as they who are favourers of vice are always the least willing to hear of a future existence; so they who are in love with virtue are the readiest to embrace that opinion, which renders it so illustrious, and makes its cause triumphant. And it must be considered, says the same noble author, that if by the hope of reward be understood the love and desire of virtuous enjoyment, or of the very practice and exercise of virtue in another life, the expectation or hope of this kind is so far from being derogatory to virtue, that it is an evidence of our loving it more sincerely, and for its own sake; nor can this principle be justly called selfish; for if the love of virtue be not mere self-interest, the love and desire of life for virtue's sake cannot be esteemed so. But if the desire of life be only through the violence of a natural aversion to death; if it be through the love of something else than natural affection to virtue, or through the

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unwillingness of parting with something else than what is purely of this kind, then it is no longer any sign or token of real virtue."

According to lord Bolingbroke's assertion, men are in general so fond of existence, that they will indulge the belief, though loaded with the burthen of a possible damnation. But, however, the desire of being set at freedom from that terror which accompanied the impending sword that hung over the head of the tyrant, occasioned many among the ancients, as well as the moderns, to exhaust all the sources of sophistical argument to persuade themselves and others out of this comfortable and rational belief. The ancient sceptics, indeed, perceived the necessity of allowing that virtue must be annexed to the idea of a first cause; that this principle must comprehend the attributes of justice and benevolence; and that a state of retribution must be inferred from these positions. It was on these grounds that they denied the existence of a Deity; but as such a denial is found to be at variance with all the principles of abstract philosophy, we, moderns, have adopted a different mode of scepticism; we acknowledge the Deity, but deny his necessary attributes.

butes. Addison observes, that when philosophy had driven atheism out of all those entrenchments, which had received their support from ignorance, she retired into the holds of deism; and the disbelief of a future state. This is considered as a more honourable tenure; and on this reason the modern philosopher is very angry with the term *atheist*, though it is very plain that the principles of his reasoning as much excludes all religious and moral considerations as those of the mere atheist. For whether, with Epicurus, we account for the formation of the universe, by the fortuitous concretion of atoms; or whether we regard the universe itself as animated and supreme; or whether we annex supremacy to any other animated intelligent being; if we regard this being as totally unconnected with any of his works; if he is too great to take our happiness or misery into consideration; if he is too wise to grant any protection, or support to our frail and feeble virtue; if he takes no cognizance of our actions; if we do not expect from him either reward or punishment, he is as much out of the question in regard to the rules of human conduct, as if he was out of the con-

constitution of things, and cannot expect the attention or the respect of his creatures, for the possession of an attribute which is more an object of terror than of love.

The ill character of a God, agreeable to lord Shaftesbury's observation, " is capable of doing great harm: but atheism is nothing positive in either way; for, however it may be indirectly an occasion of men's losing a good and sufficient sense of right and wrong, it will not, as atheism merely, be the occasion of setting up a false species of it, which only false religion or fantastical opinion is able to effect."

It is to be observed of lord Bolingbroke, that he frequently acknowledges *, that the belief of a future state, by adding the sanction of rewards and punishments to the moral law, must necessarily operate very beneficially on the mind of man, and consequently, that it is a necessary part of policy to encourage opinions which have such a tendency; yet he has exhausted all the sources of argument, and even of sophistry to weaken, if not to destroy, the force of those strong probabilities which may be drawn from abstract reasoning to

* *Philosophical Works*, vol. i. p. 307, et seq.

support this beneficial faith. But had he engaged with a warmth and an ingenuity equal to what he has used in the undermining way, for the support of this noble cause; or had he argued in the same forcible manner for the establishment, or illustration of a rational belief, as he has done for the non-eternity of the world, we would have excused him for the pains he has taken to expose the baneful tendency of those theological systems which have imposed on the credulity of man.

Having thus endeavoured to remove the difficulties which the mischievous ingenuity of the sceptic, and the weak concessions of the believer, has raised to those high probabilities which the light of reason, independent of revelation, point out to the anxious mind of man, concerning his hopes of a future state of existence; and shewn that they are grounded on a species of reasoning, which is less liable to deceive than the fallibility of sense, yiz, on the necessary attributes which must be annexed to the necessary perfection of the first cause, we shall proceed to examine the tenability of those grounds on which lord Bolingbroke supports the fabric of human virtue, and which

which he recommends as the only sure foundations of an uncorrupted religion and a pure morality.

The foundations of a rational religion, and a pure morality, have, by all the ancient writers, been supposed to rest on an exalted idea of the perfections of God, and, in particular, of his attributes of justice and benevolence, as the first and only sound principle of morality; and in the obligations which lie on all rational agents to direct their conduct on the plan of the divine Archetype*. But lord Bolingbroke, disdaining to tread in beaten paths, founds his system of religion and ethics on opposite principles; and, notwithstanding all his laboured attempts to prove the falsity of the ideas of natural and moral evil, which has prevailed in the world, from the first ages of man, and which has arisen from the uncontrovertible authority of an invariable experience, he acknowledges that many of the phenomena to be observed in the system of nature are repugnant to every human idea of goodness and justice; and, therefore, that every hypothesis founded on the position, that goodness and justice, according

* *Philosophical Works*, vol. iv, page. 369.

to human ideas, exist in the divine character, must be erroneous; as also the opinion, founded on such an erroneous hypothesis, that every one who acts in opposition to the happiness of the creature man, will be vigorously punished by the Creator. And, though, in the course of this reasoning, he sets God's wisdom so at variance with goodness, as to imply a direct contrary attribute to exist in the divine Mind; yet, in the same manner as the devout Canaanites would have endeavoured to believe of his ferocious idol Moloch, he sometimes conceives him to be possessed of goodness in a transcendant degree *, but in a manner which is not to be comprehended †.

To show that the constitution of the laws of nature cannot be founded on the moral attributes of God; or rather, that God has no moral attributes, lord Bolingbroke asks to what actions of the Deity we can apply, or from what we can deduce our notions of human justice? How, continues his lordship, shall we deduce fortitude from the attributes of God, or ascribe this virtue to him who can endure no pain, nor be excited

* Philosophical Works, vol. iv. p. 357. [†] Idem, p. 20, et seq.

posed

posed to any danger ? how temperance, when it would be the most horrid blasphemy, to suppose him subject to any human appetites and passions, and much more to some appetites so inordinate as required a particular virtue to restrain and govern ?

It is easy to see that this chain of reasoning would bring us into the absurdity of supposing an incapacity of moral virtue in the Deity; consequently, that moral virtue had no inherent perfection in its nature; or, with the philosopher Seneca, to suppose that a perfect man is, in a moral sense, a more exalted being than God, because his nature and situation enlarges his capability for the exertion of more virtues. But to cut the chain of this reasoning before it runs us into folly or blasphemy, let us take for granted, what cannot be easily disputed, that perfect wisdom implies the possession of every moral excellence: let us take for granted, that the divine Mind has, within itself, the principles of every virtue, and the capability of exertion, though some of the virtues may not fall within the limits of its exalted situation, and the purity of its nature to exercise; and, if it may be permitted to use a comparison between the Creator and the creature, let us take it for

for granted, that all the virtues are in the divine character, what fortitude would have been in the mind of Cato, if the civil state of the empire had been such as could not have afforded him an opportunity of exerting it.

To return again to the chain of Lord Bolingbroke's reasoning, who, after a kind of confession that he has puzzled himself, if not his reader, in attempting to reconcile the human idea of imperfection with the human idea of perfection, and an acknowledgment of an existing evil, with the denial of its existence *, very piously warns us not to hearken to those who tell us what we may expect God will do; or, to use his lordship's own words, instead of pronouncing what is right for him to do, believe all that he has done for that reason right. After this pious warning, his lordship proceeds to establish morals on the principle of a well-directed self-interest; asserts the truth of this maxim, that self-love and social are the same; that the reason of man is adequate to the establishing principles, necessary to promote and secure the happiness of every individual in the hap-

* Philosophical Works, vol. iv. p. 364.

pines

piness of society*, that the constitution of that system of which we make a part, imposes these laws on mankind originally, and when they are thus imposed, that they determine the will of our species as effectually, and oblige as strongly, as the most powerful principle of human nature can determine, and oblige human creatures †. "Society, says his lordship, cannot be maintained without benevolence, justice, and the other moral virtues; these virtues, therefore, are the foundations of society, and thus men are led by a chain of necessary consequences, from the instinctive law, which is the desire of happiness, to the rational law of nature, which is the means of procuring this happiness; self-love operates, in all these stages we love ourselves, we love our families, we love the particular societies to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind; like so many different vortices, the center of them all is self-love, and that which is the most distant from it, is the weakest. This will appear to be in fact the true constitution of human nature, it is the intelligible plan of divine wisdom, man is able to understand it, and may be induced to follow it, by

* Philosophical Works, vol. ii. p. 288, et seq.

† Idem, vol. iv. p. 10, et seq.

the double motive of interest and duty. As to the first, real utility and right reason coincide; as to the last, since the Author of our nature has determined us irresistibly to desire our own happiness, and since he has constituted us so, that private good depends on the public, and the happiness of every individual on the happiness of society, the practice of all the social virtues is the law of our nature, and made such by the will of God; who, having determined the end, and proportioned the means, has willed, "that we should pursue one by the other."

Lord Bolingbroke having thus laid down these principles, as the only foundations for human virtue, appears somewhat apprehensive, lest they should affect the utility and the superiority of theism over a system of atheism. In contradiction to Mr. Bayle's famous paradox *, he asserts, "that there is no comparison can be drawn between the theist and the atheist; that the atheist sees it his interest, but the theist sees it his duty, to observe the law of nature; and he adores the divine goodness that has blended together so marvelously and so graciously his greatest interest, and his greatest duty. Every kind of knowledge, whereof our nature is

* Philosophical Works, vol. ii. p. 291, et seq.

capable, combines to shew the theist, that God speaks to man in his works, and signifies his will by them: he can neither be in doubt whether it is God that speaks, nor be at a loss to understand the divine language. "An atheist, says his lordship, who has much imagination, much elevation of mind, and a great warmth of inward sentiment, may, perhaps, contemplate the difference in abstract consideration, and contrast the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice: till he falls in love with the former, he may create, as it were, an artificial moral sense; but how much more lively must this sense be in the theist, who knows not only that virtue is the perfection of his nature, but that he conforms himself, by the practice of it, to the designs of infinite wisdom, and co-operates in some sort with the Almighty!"

Though Lord Bolingbroke does not care to sink the honour of theism so low, as to put it on a level with the exploded principle of atheism, as to its influence on the line of moral conduct; yet it is observable, that the atheist and the devout theist, who disbelieve in a future state, both agree in the opinion, that self-love is not only the

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governing principle, but the only principle which actuates the conduct of the human character ; for having both agreed to sink the hopes of the animal man into the mortality of the brute, who is supposed to perish, they will not allow him to be possessed of a nature capable of being rendered deserving a higher fate. But in examining an opinion which is equally maintained by the atheist Hobbes*, and the devout theist lord Bolingbroke, let us, who argue on the contrary supposition, endeavour to discriminate those differences which the adversary wilfully confounds, and show that self-love, in the grosser sense of the word, is of a very opposite nature to rational interest ; an interest which appears to be as equally inseparable from an intelligent being, as self-love in the grosser sense of the word is to the mere animal œconomy.

As in the popular sense of the term self-love, it may be esteemed the self-good of every narrow minded creature, to be placed in a situation where all circumstances, all interests,

* Hobbes has been generally termed an atheist ; but as he does not deny the existence of a God, from the religious, moral, and political opinions which he inculcates, he may more justly be distinguished by lord Shaftesbury's definition of a demonist.

and

and all things to which he stands in relation, may be subjected to every one of those gratifications which come within the limits of self-enjoyment; so it may be esteemed the self-good of a liberal and noble minded creature, to enjoy the higher felicities which arise from the exercise of the exalted virtues. Here then we shall find a principle of action, which corresponds with the idea of a refined self-love: but, independent of those pleasurable sensations which attend the refined affections, and the elevated sentiments and passions, there is a principle of rational agency, which corresponds with the precise admeasurement of every action, with a rule of right; although the conduct it directs, militates against natural inclination, against the interest of natural affection, and where every pleasurable sensation is sacrificed to the conviction of judgment, and to the rigid dictates of a well informed understanding. Pure religion and pure morality draw their perfection from this source alone; and as the conformity of action to the duties enjoined by this principle, form the perfection of every rational agent, such a conformity must, in the abstract sense of the word, be the only rule

of action which corresponds with the true interest of every such agent. Hence we gain an idea of that rational interest which must ever attend on rational nature; and though there are very few of the human species which, in this stage of existence, have ever uniformly acted up to the principle of such an exalted virtue; yet we must be very defective of candour or justice, not to allow that characters have existed among the sons and the daughters of men, whose general tenor of conduct has been conformable to it; and consequently, that this species of virtue is not altogether incompatible with human nature.

But not to insist any longer on those immutable principles of virtue, which have no place in the creed of lord Bolingbroke, let us engage with his lordship on his own grounds, and examine how, on his lordship's principles of self-love and self-enjoyment, the intrinsic value of virtue can, in the way of argument, be so enforced on the human judgment as to carry such a conviction as may, with any colour of probability, insure its exercise in any exalted degree, or in any universal extent.

As

As lord Bolingbroke does not admit of any rule arising from an abstract fitness of things, or from any pattern of excellence to be traced in the divine Mind, as fundamental principles on which to ground the rationality of human conduct ; we must find these principles in a certain sagacity used in the discovering that rule of action, which is the best adapted to interest, in the grosser sense of the word, or to the attainment of a continued series of the most pleasurable sensations.

The appetites, passions, and affections, either of the innocent, the vicious, or the virtuous kind, it must be allowed, are the necessary instruments to convey to the body or the mind of man, every possible mode of pleasurable sensation. But these appetites, passions, and affections, are of that turbulent nature, as to impose with such an authority over the weak power of reason, that they confound her entirely in the proper discrimination of causes ; and the blind monitor is often at a loss in sifting the wheat from the chaff, or in the science of perceiving such an agreement and disagreement in the nature of things, as may lead her to a proper choice in those sources of delight which are to be found in the

principles of a national happiness, or to improve and cultivate such of them as may bestow the highest, the most lasting, and the most uninterrupted felicity, and to neglect or starve the growth of those which have a more doubtful tendency. Indeed Lord Bolingbroke seems to be so well aware of the difficulties which lie in the weakness of reason, and the strength of the passions, that he pronounces it altogether incompatible with the frail nature of man, to acquire such a degree of rational excellence as shall enable him to a strict observance of the moral law; and in his curious account of the phenomenon of moral evil, he supposes that the gift of such a rational excellence never was in the divine plan, because altogether incompatible with that rank of intelligent beings in which man is placed. Here then we find a strange contradiction, altogether as repugnant to the human idea of wisdom, as some of the phenomena of nature in lord Bolingbroke's view of things, are to the human idea of benevolence; and if we allow that a law is given to creatures, who, by a positive defect in their nature, are not capable of understanding its dictates, we must be obliged to confess, that the wisdom of

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the Law-giver is altogether incomprehensible to our weak faculties. And if we allow that this law is coerced in a manner as shall render the breach of it penal to a creature whose positive defects disable him from following it, we must be guilty of the presumption deprecated by his lordship, viz. the ascribing to the all-perfect Being what is evidently repugnant to our ideas of perfection.

But, fays lord Bolingbroke, can you tame the uncontrollable passions of the species, by any other method of awakening them to the sense of their real interest? has the sanction of rewards and punishments, as delivered in the precepts of revealed religion, done it? And if these powerful motives fail of such an effect, his lordship might have added can such an effect be produced by the establishment of an invariable rule of right, to which the understanding may give a cold assent, but which will never have sufficient force to cope for mastery with the potent power of the passions? To this reasoning, we answer, that the establishment of an invariable rule of right, to direct the conduct of all intelligent agents, supports, on a firm and immovable foundation, the

sanction of future rewards and punishments, as delivered in the precepts of revealed religion; that this sanction, according to his lordship's acknowledgment, must operate very beneficially with the gross sense of the vulgar herd of mankind; and that the establishment of such an invariable rule of right to direct the conduct of all intelligent agents, confirms the judgment of the philosopher beyond the sceptical doubts of the most subtle sophistry. And, whilst it teaches him to discover a rational interest in an obedience to its dictates, a belief that the virtues of the divine Mind correspond with his idea of virtue, will give to virtue a beauty and an excellence capable of attracting his admiration, and warming all the affections of his soul towards it.

“ Though the service of fear, says lord Shaftesbury, be allowed ever so low and base; yet religion being still a discipline and a progress of the soul towards perfection, the motive of reward and punishment is primary, and of the highest moment with us, till being capable of more sublime instruction, we are led from this servile state to the generous service of affection and love.”

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Although we must agree to the proposition of lord Bolingbroke, that a sense of the grosser interests of self will lead to the exercise of some of the essential social qualities, such as the forming societies for defence, submitting to the rules of government and order, and co-operating with the magistrate in the coercion of law ; and that the sense of a more refined self-interest will, in some characters, produce sentiments which go under the denomination of a moral taste ; yet the social qualities necessary to the formation and defence of societies, are limited to these effects, and act very little in the support and preservation of those manners on which the well being and happiness of the species depend. And a moral taste is so intimately connected with natural disposition, and the turn which the passions and the affections take, from a variety of impressions to which the creature man is exposed, that it must, from the nature of things, be circumscribed within the limits of a paucity of numbers. For should you attempt to persuade a man who is naturally avaricious, cruel, insensible of the feelings of sympathy, and attached to all the interests of self-gratification, that his greater interest lies in the foregoing the pleasures

which he receives from the indulgence of his more natural affections and appetites, and, from arguments drawn from this position, endeavour to engage him to cultivate the opposite means of self-good ; he will answer you, that his conception of the means of self-good is very opposite to yours ; and that every man has his peculiar taste. If he has sufficient reading for the purpose, he will quote the authority of lord Bolingbroke for the assertion, that one man can never judge of the *summum bonum* of another* ; that he is satisfied with his choice ; and that he wishes you a perfect enjoyment of yours.

If you reason after this manner with a man who has inflamed his imagination with the hot pursuits of ambition, he will tell you, that he perceives his interest to lie in the exercise of such social qualities as preserve in some measure the compacts of society. But as to any just regard to the equal rights of men, a rigid observance of those laws of the constitution on which its internal welfare, and the general happiness of the citizens at large, depend ; and yet more, such a regard to justice and integrity,

* *Philosophical Works*, vol. iv. p. 167.

as will prevent him from spoiling the public, if opportunity invites; of raising himself by the dispensation of its rules, either in a private or public case; these, he will say, are mere metaphysical and abstract distinctions, which he does not comprehend, nor ever intends to perplex himself with, lest he should be persuaded, like the dog in the fable, to part with the substance for the mere shadow of good.

If you direct your moral instructions to a man who is in the possession of an abused power, he will tell you, that power, in the abstract sense of the word, is the only excellence you allow in the Deity. He will tell you, that he can perceive, by the constitution of things, that some of God's creatures are made to serve as instruments for the gratification of more fortunate beings; and that he shall never give up the privilege of situation for an idle chimera of virtue, which tends to produce a more equal distribution of good than he finds to be in the divine plan.

If you argue with a man who is inflamed with the heat of a lustful appetite, he will tell you, that it is folly in the extreme to suppose, that the appetites were given for any other end but to be gratified: and if you

you urge, that the seducing innocence, or violating the peace of families are immoral actions, he will ask you on what authority you found your documents? Not sure on the principle of self good, for I feel, will he say, that the sacrifice which you seem to require, is quite contrary to my happiness.

These mortifying answers would undoubtedly be given by all those who were engaged in any of the grosser pursuits of enjoyment, or who were gratified in the indulgence of any of the vicious dispositions of the mind. But when the philosopher has been thus foiled by the impotence and feebleness of those principles on which he pretends to preach the advantages which attend the practice of virtue, even by the grossest and the most profligate infringers of its sacred laws, how will he be puzzled, in what manner will he arrange his arguments, if he should attempt to inculcate those high principles of self-denial, and self-devotion, which the exalted actions of heroic virtue demand?

It is true, may the man of moral taste say, I find a calm tranquillity of soul, and a pleasure in the exercise of the virtuous affections, which are more than sufficient

to compensate for the sacrifice of all the gross enjoyment of sense, and those fantastic objects of happiness which take their rise in a disordered imagination ; and from this fertile source of evil, inflame the passions to a maddening height : but what arguments can you urge, what can I urge to myself, for the reasonableness of giving up an existence which the exercise of virtue has rendered happy, for the ideal phantom of heroic merit. For, should I be inclined, from a kind of sickly ambition to this self-devotement, what arguments can persuade me, that it will be truly meritorious thus to give up the interests, the safety, and security of my family, and thus to sacrifice the welfare of those whom nature has more immediately placed under my care and protection, to the dictates of the mad ambition of acting the part of a Quixote in morals ? Had I but the satisfaction of believing in the doctrine of this invariable rule of right which you reject, I should have some standard whereby to direct my conduct. I should indulge the comfortable conviction, that I am pleasing, and faintly imitating the transcendent virtues of that divine character, whose approbation gives

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the stamp of excellence to the actions of every finite creature. But how, on your principles of ethics, can I tell whether, by such a self-devotement, I should not oppose the course of an evil, which is pre-determined by the divine will, and consequently not in the power of an inferior being to diminish in any respect? how do I know that such unrequired efforts will not be regarded as an impertinent and bold attempt to break through the rank in which I am placed in the scale of creation? And the meeting with a halter, and the ruin of the fortune of myself and family, may be the judicial consequences annexed to such presumption.

It is very plain, that if we had no other rule to walk by but the law of nature, traced by the idea that the corrupt mind of man forms of self-happiness, this rule would be of as variable a nature as are the different constitutions and the dispositions of the different characters of the species. The gross selfish man would have a rule for himself, in which we may be sure that benevolence, temperance, and moderation, would have no part. All the principles of a sympathising tenderness would be excepted by the

the cruel. Justice and integrity would be excepted by the ambitious and the avaricious. Whilst the philosopher, whose acquired knowledge and wisdom led him to regard the dictates of virtue, in the ordinary course of its practice, would reason himself out of every generous propensity which militated with his preservation ; and in particular those which militated against the dictates of the natural affections.

In this system of philosophy no consideration can have a superior weight to the interest of friends, family, and all the tender ties of blood. And though, in the general sense of the term, public good may be said to constitute private good ; yet, in the œconomy of political society, there will be found, in the different situations of individuals, many exceptions to this rule ; and these exceptions will always be seen and felt, when any obvious advantage may accrue, by a departure from the line of public duty. The betraying public trust, in cases where the happiness of present and succeeding generations are concerned, may set some families in a state of power and worldly prosperity, beyond what the adherence to any such rule of duty could do ;

do; and it must be very plain to an accurate reasoner, that if the rule of interest is the only criterion by which we are to judge of the nature of virtue, or the will of the Deity, when that interest lies on the side of vice and moral turpitude, it follows, that it must be the will of the Deity to pursue it through every direct or indirect path. And if absolute power can in any intelligent agency constitute right, it must be the peculiar essence of this attribute to give an arbitrary quality to all the actions of moral agents. It will therefore follow, that absolute power can never be abused in such a manner as to constitute the quality of a vicious agency in any person who is possessed of such a privilege; nor will it be true wisdom to sacrifice self-preservation by any opposition to its dictates.

Thus we shall be insensibly led, from the consequences arising from such positions, to accede to Mr. Hobbes's principles of ethics, and resolve all human morality in the will of the magistrate. For can it be supposed, that God will prescribe a rule to his creatures which is the direct contrary to what he follows himself? It cannot be on a principle of benevolence, for that is denied

denied to be seen in the constitution of things. It cannot be on the principle of wisdom, for such a kind of wisdom implies benevolence. And if a man is only to be directed by his notions of happiness in his conduct in life, the making a wrong choice can never be esteemed vice; nor can any harder term be given to it than an error in judgment.

The admitting, therefore, any opinions which militate against the immutable nature of virtue, or lessen the idea of the perfect benevolence and transcendent excellency of God's moral attributes; tend to weaken any fixed rule of human conduct, and must necessarily act to the corruption and the depravity of human nature, to the growth and the excess of all the baneful appetites and passions; to the discouragement of every attempt to subject the vicious inclinations to the dictates of true wisdom, and to the true principles of public and private happiness; and must render the generality of mankind insolent in prosperity, abject in a state of dependency, and overwhelmed with despair in a state of adversity.

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Even among the most judicious and the most enlightened of the species, moderate or true Epicureanism will, on these principles, be the most exalted kind of virtue which can prevail. And even lord Bolingbroke seems to acknowledge*, though he endeavours to refine away the acknowledgement, that without an eternal and invariable rule to direct the conduct of all intelligent beings, that no system of morality can be established on an authority which can command the obedience of man. For what one of the species asserts to be a moral action, will be disputed by another; and thus the rule of duty will vary as it suits convenience, or is agreeable to prejudice: or, to speak more properly, since the contrary positions in reality set men loose from all moral obligation, every man will think he has a right to determine for himself on points of interest or happiness; and who can expect that all men will acquiesce in any one criterion or rule of human felicity?

It is also to be observed, that the laying down erroneous principles and false rules

* Philosophical Works, vol. iv. p. 448, et seq.

of conduct sets the understanding on the side of the passions, and of a mistaken interest; and, therefore, engages in a vicious course of action, men whose cool tempers and natural strength of judgment enable them to be more mischievous to the temporal felicity of others than to their own; and also to corrupt the judgment of those with whom they converse on the subject of their spiritual happiness. Such men are evils of a more pestilent nature in society, though often regarded with respect and veneration, than the maddest and the most unfortunate of those victims to passion to whom the resentment, and often the malevolent persecution of the world, is pointed.

It is thus that the modern theists have set God on the throne of righteousness; and by denying the doctrines of a future state, they are obliged to call the sound principles of morality in question, or to admit that God, in our sense of the word, may do evil. But on a fair and candid survey of their doctrine, it will appear to be more disrespectful to the eternal First Cause than the wild opinions which Epicurus entertained of the nature of the heathen deities; for these beings are represented as infinitely

above attending to the cares of humanity, and sporting themselves with enjoyments adapted to celestial taste. But the God of the modern theist, satisfied with the having adapted and regulated those materials which he found ready made to his hands, agreeable to what his infinite wisdom saw to be the best of all possible good, actuated with the insatiable vanity of a mere human artist, amuses himself, through all eternity, in the contemplation of his ingenuity and sagacity, regardless of the effects of that large portion of evil which, by a necessity altogether independent of his will, he is obliged to admit. And he sees, without any concern, that the portion of good which falls to the lot of his creatures, is enjoyed by the very worst of them; whilst the best are exposed to evils which, in some cases, appear too severe for the punishment of a flagitious wickedness. Thus it will be found, on a fair and candid survey of the subject, that all attempts to account for the phenomenon of evil, in the system of the creation, on that common place observation, "that partial evil is universal good," must, in the œconomy of moral conduct, be productive of the worst consequences;

quences; because it necessarily limits either the power or the benevolence of the Deity, and teaches the prosperous to look with contempt on the unfortunate part of the species, as not coming, in the nature of things, within the compass of God's mercy and benevolence.

It is unnecessary to make any observations on the subject of atheistical opinions, because such opinions are in this country entirely exploded; and, besides the arguments for the being of a God, as well as those for the reality of the Christian revelation, has been so ably set forth by several distinguished persons, whose profession particularly marks them as the proper advocates for the sacred truths of religion, that such observations would be an impertinent and ridiculous repetition of those arguments which have been already given in a masterly manner. On these reasons, therefore, we shall only observe, that it is a kind of phenomenon in the republic of letters, that our ingenious neighbours on the continent should, in this enlightened age, revive all the exploded puerilities of the ancient sceptical schools; and as that bold and determined atheist, the author of the *Système de la Nature*, appears to have taken

the atheistical side of the question on a moral principle, and for the moral purpose of the happiness of the human species, and that he has formed very just notions of political establishments and the rights of nature, we shall venture a few observations on those principles of utility on which he attacks the general principle of religion, and endeavours to revive sceptical doubts on the very being of a God.

This famous author, who has ventured to brave the Majesty of heaven, and set at defiance the vengeance of the Deity, has adopted the notion, that every kind of political evil is centered in the power of the priesthood. And, at the same time that he entertains a much higher idea of the common sense of mankind than experience authorizes, he supposes that this common sense has been misled, from the influence of religious sentiment, and diverted from an attention to the preservation of that happiness which nature has provided for all her terrestrial children, by fixing her eye on regions of ideal existence. Whilst the priest, says he, has his hand in your pocket, he tells you to look up to a state beyond the solar system for your happiness.

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There is a fallacy in this way of reasoning, which has misled the judgment of this well-intentioned writer; for the same easiness in the blind multitude to be imposed on by priests, will operate in a manner equally mischievous, when craft and artifice assume no other than the civil form. The paraphernalia of the magistrate, the splendor which must ever attend power and riches, and which may be supposed will more particularly attend these advantages in societies, governed by principles of atheism, will meet with none of that antidote to its poisonous quality which religious sentiment, by equalizing all mankind in the eyes of a supreme and intelligent Being, must necessarily afford.

Superior abilities, when favoured by opportunity, will always be more than a match for the common sense of mankind; and when every religious, and, consequently, every moral restraint is taken away, there is no length of wicked policy that individuals, who have got the start of their fellow-citizens in the advantages of opulence and power, will not go to render these advantages permanent. Abuse will afford means for abuse; and the besotted multitude,

who are always prone to idolatry, for want of the proper object of religious sentiment, will worship those as gods whom their own stupid activity or acquiescence has been the means of exalting. And, instead of endeavouring to rectify their error, by cultivating those parts of knowledge which might make them a match for those usurpers, they will adopt the belief that the blind favour of fortune has constituted a very substantial difference in the fate of her followers. Despair will produce its natural effect, indifference; for at no period of the known ages of the world were men under a more cruel and ignominious servitude than under the imperial government of the Cæsars, when atheism was the prevalent philosophical principle; and what is more remarkable, this revolution was built on the ruins of the most glorious condition of political freedom that men had ever tasted; and it met with an universal and cheerful acquiescence before a sufficient time had elapsed to obliterate the idea of the former state of happiness. But inactivity naturally follows atheism, and the influence of true religion will be found the only antidote to the inordinate selfishness of

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the species, the inequalities of mental endowment, and other accidental circumstances, which increase the weight and power of these inequalities.

As positions, grounded on matter of fact, are of too authoritative a nature to be combated by mere speculation, lord Bolingbroke takes care to back his principles of reasoning with matter of fact; and gives us an historical anecdote of a certain large society, whose extensive empire occupies a very considerable part of the northern hemisphere, where the religion of nature, with an indisputed sovereignty, maintained for ages its original purity, untainted with the dross of superstition, and unclouded with the mists of theological speculation *.

“ There is a country into the antiquities of which we look farther back than into any other, says the noble author, where we may find examples to confirm and illustrate what is here said, by comparing the effects of natural religion unmixed and uncorrupted with those of artificial theology and superstition. The country I mean is China, whose traditions and histories deserve at least as much credit as those of ancient nations, that have been

* *Philosophical Works*, vol. iv. p. 194, et seq.

known to us longer, and which our scholars quote with so much assurance. Now natural religion seems to have been preserved more pure and unmixed in this country than in any other, and for a longer time from that when it was first inhabited, and government was first established in it. The ancient Chinese held it unlawful to dispute about the divine nature; about the attributes of God; the exercise of his power; or the conduct of his providence: and it seems very plain, that the concise manner in which their sages expressed themselves whenever they spoke of the Supreme Being, and upon which their refining successors have endeavoured to found, on part at least, their atheism, proceeded from this modest, this reasonable, this pious principle. They observed the order of nature, and from thence they deduced all the rules of private morality and public policy. To compare his conduct with the law of heaven and earth is the character of a perfect prince, in the works of Confucius. That reason should preside over passion was the great rule of life; and to walk according to it was to walk in the great high way of life. Thus they were led, by simple and plain reasoning, from the works to the will

will of God, and to three kinds of moral obligation; to those of an individual of the member of a family, and of the member of a political society: bare reason enforced so well the practice of natural religion, by the laws and constitutions of this empire, and the duties of it became so habitual by education and custom, that this people enjoyed, under their two first imperial families, which continued eleven hundred years, all the blessings of public and private virtue that humanity is capable of enjoying."

It is to be observed, that Lord Bolingbroke's matter of fact lies very far in those remote ages of antiquity, of whose transactions any thing may be asserted, and any thing may be denied; for, according to the same author, when other nations begin to appear, they appear already under the influence of absurd theology and gross superstition; and that the Chinese began, in the same remote antiquity, to fall into the same errors, and all their consequences. Thus the period in which we are to view this golden age is eleven hundred years prior to any historical knowledge which we are able to trace of any other society. But to his lordship, who rejects with contempt

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all the authority of human testimony for the support of the Christian revelation, and lays it down as one of the rules of belief, that a fact should be narrated by witnesses who have no probable bias on their minds, either from interest or from vanity, i. e. from the inclination of advancing the glory and honour of the society to whom they belong, and that this fact should not militate against an invariable rule of experience, either on moral or on physical subjects ; to his lordship, I say, we may object to the authority of the fact he endeavours to establish, and assert, that he might as well have brought his evidence from the region of the moon, as from traditions of such a remote antiquity.

But as his lordship acknowledges, that the ancient laws and customs of the empire are still as inviolably kept as they were before the mischief of theological opinions prevailed, we shall proceed to examine those ancient laws and customs by the ideas which we have gained through the means of abstract reasoning, and the lights of revealed religion of a certain principle, called justice, which we regard as a fundamental principle in ethics, and consequently in moral happiness. By the ac-

count which his lordship gives of the opinion of the ancient sages, as to the attributes of their Deity, if they ventured to form any opinion at all of them, it was confined to that species of excellence which his lordship himself regards as the only true object of praise and admiration. Now, we cavillers may be apt to observe, that this same unlucky opinion which the ancient Chinese sage entertained of the transcendent excellence of the Deity, led him to think, that in the word *might*, was contained every idea of right; that power is of a nature to give to every act of the powerful, the quality of right; and from this source of reasoning, proceeded all that legally authorised voluptuous sensuality which, at this present, maintains its ground in the established laws and constitutions of the Chinese empire. And, from this source of reasoning, the helpless part of the human species, that is women and children, have, from the first foundation of this ancient empire to the present moment, felt the yoke of as grievous a servitude as is in the power of imagination to form.

But we need not cite the examples of the Chinese, of the Gnostic heretics, nor of many more as equally adapted to the

the subject, to perceive how well, and with what precision true morality can be read in the book of nature, independent of any other light. We may quote certain sentiments of his lordship, which seem to give the same transcendent quality to positive power, wherever it is found to exist, either in God or man; and it is undoubtedly on such grounds of reasoning that his lordship thinks, that the restraining men from the practice of polygamy, is an unjust and an unnecessary restraint on the natural prerogative of the male species*, to whom God had, for very good reasons, allowed such a necessary indulgence; although, in respect to the same prerogative, he restrained, in such necessary limitations as were adapted to square with the interests of such a prerogative, the same natural appetite in the inferior creature, woman: and his lordship, not content with sacrificing the happiness and the liberty of this more helpless part of the species to the capricious lusts of the lords and masters of the creation, seems to admire that part of the Jewish law which deprives women of property, for the sake of preserving the opulence of families in the

* Philosophical Works, vol. iv. p. 109, seq.

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male species; and he gives a kind of approbation to a certain amendment made in favour of the general heirs male, to a judicial decision, which had passed for the right of property in the female children of a wealthy Jew, named Zelophichad, who died without male issue. The amendment was, that the female children should be obliged to take husbands out of the males of their own race. Now, of this amendment, which denied to women the right of choice in their domestic tyranny *, his lordship observes, that if in many cases it be agreeable to the law of nature to extend the bonds of society by a prohibition of marriages between persons too near a-kin, it is, in many cases, at least, as agreeable to this law to preserve possessions and wealth in the families to which they belong, and not to suffer them to be carried away by any female caprice into others.

* *Philosophical Works*, vol. iv. p. 131.

It is thus that lord Bolingbroke reads the law of nature, and on this reading forms his religion and his ethics. Nor is it any wonder that justice, in its more abstract or general sense, should be little considered, or little understood, by those who can believe that it is agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of an all-perfect Being to form two species of creatures of equal intelligence and similar feelings, and consequently capable of an equal degree of suffering under injuries, and should confine one of these species as a kind of property to a different species of their fellow-creatures, not endowed with any qualities of mind sufficient to prevent the enormous abuse of such a power.

As lord Bolingbroke admits of no apparent positive excellence in the Deity but that of power, except the attribute of wisdom, according to a particular idea which he has formed of this quality; he consequently

quently supposes in the divine character certain irritability which is easily inflamed into anger at any liberties taken by his creatures in those investigations of abstract truths which may lead to an examination of the divine character; and although the interest of the creature is inseparably connected with the moral attributes of his Creator, yet lord Bolingbroke is very angry with such an impertinent curiosity, and censures and explodes those texts of Scripture in which the Almighty is described as encouraging his creatures in such an examination, and with a transcendent benevolence to call upon them to search into the truth of his ways. It is, however, on the authority of those texts of Scripture, and in obedience to the dictates of reason, that the more vulgar class of moralists have ventured on that sublimest of all contemplations, the moral excellencies of the divine Mind.

“ One would think, says lord Shaftesbury, that it were no hard thing to know our weaknesses at first sight, and distinguish the features of human frailty; one would think it were easy to understand that provocation and offence, anger, revenge, jealousy

lousy in point of honour or power, love of fame, glory, and the like, belong only to limited beings, and are necessarily excluded a Being who is perfect and universal. But if we have never settled with ourselves any notion of what is morally excellent, or if we cannot trust to that reason which tells us, that nothing besides what is so can have place in the Deity, we can never trust to any thing which others relate of him, or which he himself reveals to us: we must be satisfied before hand, that he is good, and can never deceive us; without this there can be no real religion, faith, or confidence. Now, if there be really something previous to revelation, some antecedent demonstration of reason to assure us, that God is, and that withal he is so good as not to deceive us; the same reason, if we will trust to it, will demonstrate to us, that God is so good as to exceed the very best of us in goodness; and after this manner, we can have no dread or suspicion to make us uneasy; for it is malice only, and not goodness which can make us afraid." Whoever thinks, says the same excellent writer, that there is a God, and pretends formally to believe that he is just and good, must

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I suppose that there is independently such a thing as justice and goodness, truth and falsehood, right and wrong; according to which, he pronounces, that God is just, righteous, and true. If the mere will, decree, or law of God, be said absolutely to constitute right, then are these latter words of no significance at all; for thus, if each part of a contradiction were affirmed for truth by the supreme power, they would consequently become true. Thus, if one person were decreed to suffer for another's fault, the sentence would be just and equitable; and thus in the same manner, "If arbitrarily, and without reason, some beings were destined to endure perpetual ills, and others as constantly to enjoy good, this also would pass under the same denomination; but to say of any thing that it is just or unjust, on such a foundation as this, is to say nothing, or to speak without a meaning: and thus it appears, that where a real devotion and hearty worship, is paid to a supreme Being, who, in his history or character, is represented otherwise than as really and truly just and good, there must ensue a loss of rectitude, a disturbance of thought, and a corruption of temper and manners in the believer; his honesty will of necessity be sup-

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planted by his zeal, whilst he is thus unnaturally influenced, and rendered thus immorally devout."

The noble author emboldened by that liberty in judgment, which is a necessary privilege in a moral agent, proceeds to declare, that virtue is something in itself not arbitrary or factitious, not constituted from, without, or dependent on custom, fancy, or will, not even on the supreme will itself, which being necessarily good, is governed by it, and ever uniform with it. "Nothing, adds this excellent writer, can be more unbecoming, than to talk magisterially and in venerable terms of a supreme Nature, an infinite Being, and a Deity, when all the while a providence, nor any thing like order or the government of a mind, is never admitted; for when these are understood, and real divinity acknowledged, the notion is not dry and barren; but such consequences are necessarily drawn from it as must set us in action, and find employment for our strongest affections. All the duties of religion evidently follow hence, and no exceptions remain against any of those great maxims which revelation has established."

As both these celebrated noblemen, the earl of Shaftesbury and lord Bolingbroke, are classed

ed among the first of the deistical writers, though lord Shaftesbury, in no part of his writings, positively declares himself an antichristian, we have made large extracts from the first of these noble writers, in order to show the different tendency of the different principles on which they found religion and morals. The principles laid down by lord Shaftesbury are essential to the support of rational Christianity, and a future state, and to fix the immutability of moral truth: the principles laid down by lord Bolingbroke are inimical to all these, and consequently adopted by his lordship with a view to blast the dearest hopes of man; although, according to his own acknowledgments, he saps all the foundations of human virtue, and renders the universal extent of its practice difficult, if not impossible, to enforce on reasons which will stand the test of the inquisitive enquirer, or the retorted arguments of the acute reasoner. But as superstition and scepticism equally involve the mind in such confusion on the nature of moral truths, and the relative duties which the creature man owes to his Creator, and to his fellow-associates in this stage of existence, as to form one of those

insuperable difficulties which have hitherto prevented the fixing morals on such a firm basis of certainty as is necessary to engage the mind of man to a proper attention to that rational interest which forms his sovereign good, and from which alone he can ever attain happiness in every probable stage of his existence, we shall give the reader an idea of the ill consequences of superstition in the following representation of lord Shaftesbury.

“ If there be a religion which teaches the adoration and love of God, says this noble author, whose character it is to be captious, and of high resentment, subject to wrath and anger, furious, revengeful, and revenging himself when offended on others than those who gave the offence; and if there be added to the character of this God a fraudulent disposition, encouraging deceit and treachery amongst men, favourable to a few, though for slight causes, and cruel to the rest; it is evident that such a religion as this, being strongly enforced, must of necessity raise even an approbation and respect towards the vices of this kind, and breed a suitable disposition, a capricious, partial, and revengeful temper;

temper; for even irregularities and enormities of a heinous kind, must in many cases appear illustrious to one who considers them in a Being admired and contemplated with the highest honour and veneration."

In order to form just notions of the nature of our duty to God and man, it will be absolutely necessary to be well informed of the true grounds on which the principles of virtue are founded, and in what manner they correspond with the moral attributes of God and the Divine Will. Let us not, therefore, be seduced by the erroneous belief of the bigot and the enthusiast to ascribe to God, under the notion of goodness, what we should esteem partiality in man; nor under the notion of justice what we should regard as cruelty in our own species: nor let us, with a credulity equally mischievous, be seduced by the unbeliever to confound under an idolatrous notion of power, all the immutable distinctions of right and wrong, and confine the active attributes of God to a quality which, in the moral sense of things, can only be excellent when rendered subordinate to a benevolent purpose.

C H A P. IV.

Remarks on Dr. King's Origin of Moral Evil, with Observations on the Doctrines of Liberty and Necessity.

HAVING, in the two preceding chapters, touched upon one of the most material impediments to such a knowledge of the true principles of morals, as must evince, to the candid mind, the importance of a virtuous conduct in the article of human happiness; and shown that this impediment lies in the false and erroneous opinions broached by the enthusiast, the bigot, and the sceptic, on the independent difference of things, and on the unlimited nature of God's power, and the transcendent excellency of his moral attributes; we shall proceed to show, that an enlarged knowledge of the nature and extent of our moral and religious duties, and the powers given us by God for the performance of such duties, lie in a just insight of the mechanism of the human mind, and the proper exer-

tion of its various faculties; and that impediments of an insuperable nature to this necessary knowledge arise from certain rooted prejudices, which, whilst they exist in general opinion, must ever prevent any improvement in that necessary part of mental discipline, by which we gain an empire over the appetites and the passions, by which we resist the force of all those various objects of desire, which the mind frames from the perceptions of sense, and by which alone we can combat all the wayward inclinations and false and fanciful notions of happiness, which take their rise from the unrestrained impulse of internal and external causes.

If there be any thing obscure and difficult in philosophy, says Dr. King, we are sure to find it in that part which treats of election and liberty; for there is no point about which the learned are less consistent with themselves, or more divided with one another. Indeed the doctor is in the right; for the confusion and discordancy which prevail in the opinions of the learned concerning free agency, and the nature and the extent of this principle in the human species, show that a person must be endow-

ed with no mean ability in metaphysical sagacity, to fathom the depth of this arcanum in nature, which has so long puzzled the wit and learning of the sage, and which is still the subject of the warmest contest in literary dispute. The ascertainment of this most desirable and most necessary point of knowledge was disregarded by the ancients, or believed to lie beyond the limits of human knowledge and human sagacity: and indeed their ignorance of the mechanism of the human mind, seems to form an insuperable bar to such an attainment. But that vast fund of metaphysical truth, which lies in Mr. Locke's incomparable Treatise on the Human Understanding, opens to the moderns such an insight into this mystery of nature, that nothing but an obstinate prejudice, arising from an ill grounded apprehension of the consequences which follow the ascertainment of truth on this subject, could prevent the question from being amicably decided on that part of the dispute, which must necessarily lead to the perfection of mental discipline.

On those ill-grounded apprehensions of the consequences which are supposed to follow the ascertainment of truth on this sub-
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ject, and which have occasioned a kind of voluntary obscurity in the conceptions of several well meaning and distinguished persons, whose natural faculties are of a very comprehensive kind, it is to be observed, that no such apprehensions ought ever to stop, or in any way impede the progress of philosophical investigation; for it is not to be supposed that God, to whose benevolence we are indebted for all our powers of investigation, would have given us any faculties which were not intended for our use and advantage in the progress of our virtue and our duty; and much less would he have given us any of such a superior and independent kind, as could enable us to discover any mysteries which he intended to be concealed, and more especially if such a discovery could produce any interruption to the determined course of his providence.

Dr. King, however prejudiced with the view of consequences, has resolved to take that side of the argument which he conceives to be the safest, and prepares to justify the ways of God on the fruitful subject of moral evil, on the highest principle of philosophical liberty; and, after having discarded physical necessity, philosophical or moral necessity, and that liberty of will which is

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supposed to be directed, but not governed, by the understanding, as carrying with them consequences derogatory to God, and hostile to moral conduct, he proceeds to establish liberty on a freedom of choice, altogether independent of the dictates of the understanding, or any other motive arising from the impulse of passion, or the importunity of appetite. Having, therefore, premised such a total indifference in the will to every cause that is without itself, as is necessary to his hypothesis, but which seems to take away also every cause for any kind of volition, he removes the difficulty, by describing the will as a kind of predominant appetite, which is gratified in the simple enjoyment of choice; and which has within itself every power and means of gratification, independent of any external cause arising from a sentiment of desire and aversion, and which, by a kind of enchantment, can give to every object of choice a principle of pleasure, i. e. says the doctor, the goodness of the object does not precede the action of election, so as to excite it; but election makes the goodness in the object, that is, the thing is agreeable, because chosen; and not chosen, because agreeable, we cannot therefore enquire after

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any other cause of election than the power itself.

Before we proceed to make any comments on Dr. King's hypothesis, we shallendeavour to explain the nature of those distinctions which are generally implied in the terms physical necessity, philosophical or moral necessity, and in that liberty of will which is supposed to be directed by the understanding, but is not necessarily subjected to its dictates. Physical necessity in man is considered as a necessity imposed on the will by the power of a divine impulse; or from a negation of such a strength in the faculties and powers of the human mind, as are necessary to oppose the force of that desire or aversion which arises from the continual action of corporeal and mental causes. Philosophical or moral necessity, is that necessity which arises from the irresistible force which the understanding has on volition, by its discriminations on the nature of those objects of choice which present themselves to the mind, as to its conceptions of good and evil; and of all those variety of distinctions which are comprised in the mischievous or the advantageous, the pleasurable or the painful, or in that irresistible force which often arises from habit, from

the overgrown power of pampered and inordinate appetites, or from that energetic impulse which takes its rise from the strong emotions which attend the exalted passions.

Those who argue for a perfect freedom of will, although they allow that volition is directed by the understanding, premise, that when any good is proposed to the mind, which is not the chief good, the will can suspend the action, and command the understanding to propose some other object of volition, or the same under some other appearance; which may be always done, since every thing but the chief good is of such a nature, that the understanding may apprehend some respect or relation, wherein it is incommodious: notwithstanding, therefore, say they, that the will always does follow some judgment of the understanding, which is made about the subsequent actions, yet it is not necessarily determined by any, for it can suspend its actions, and therefore it is not only free from compulsion, but also indifferent in itself with regard to its actions, and determines itself without necessity.

In regard to the first question of human agency, it is to be observed, that all the principles of a physical necessity, are so repugnant to every idea of human virtue, and

so contrary to the whole course of experience, that, except in some cases where divine grace is supposed to operate with an irresistible impulse, it is not at present to be found either in the philosophic or the vulgar creed.

In regard to the second question, it is to be observed, that philosophical or moral necessity had the misfortune to be offered to the consideration of the literary world, by men whose apparent attempts to weaken or destroy the principles of virtue, and a rational faith in the promises of the Gospel, rendered them very suspicious guides to truth, and gave an additional weight to those prejudices which ever attend on novel doctrines. Had Hobbes's mischievous opinions had no existence, it is likely the famous Dr. Clarke would never have drawn his pen against the no less famous Leibnitz. We shall not, however, in this place make any comments on the doctrine of a philosophical or moral necessity; but proceed to observe on the third question concerning a freedom of will directed by the understanding, that to be directed and to command is an express contradiction in terms; and that if the will is a discriminating power, there is no need of such

such a faculty as the understanding ; and if the understanding is the only discriminating power in the mind of man, on the various distinctions which have their place in the nature of objects, it must have, on a supposition that the will is directed by such discriminations, a proper force over its volitions ; and though the will may have a power of suspending action, and of obliging the understanding to make more accurate discriminations, yet if the last judgment passed by the understanding is the cause of volition, the will cannot be said to determine itself independent of the necessity to which it must be subject from such judgment.

We shall now proceed to examine the rationality of Dr. King's hypothesis, and the merit and the utility of those opinions which he has framed on the nature and cause of moral evil, and of its necessary existence in the system of created intelligent nature. Dr. King having premised a very fruitful source of moral evil, in the strange power and inordinate appetite of the will, declares it to be the sole unlimited principle of agency in all intelligent nature. The counsels of the divine Being are under its predominant controul, and

and the nature of good and evil, receive their essential qualities from their conformity or discordancy to the will of God. Thus, according to the necessary consequences which follow Dr. King's position, the present essential qualities of good and evil arise merely from accident; for if God had willed confusion and eternal discord to reign, and the relations of things had been totally changed, if men had been constituted after the nature of fiends, and the predominant qualities inherent in all animal life had been of the most ferocious kind, such a system would have been as completely good as one in which all created nature, from a progressive course of suffering and improvement, is ordained to terminate in order, perfection, and happiness.

Could we suppose, says the doctor, that there is such a thing as better or worse in the world, in the objects themselves, who will affirm that the goodness and wisdom of God will not determine him to choose the better; for who can honestly postpone the better, and prefer the worse? As then, in indifferent matters there can be no reason why one is chosen before the other, so there is no need of any; for since the divine Will

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is self-active, and must necessarily be determined to one of the indifferent things, it is its own reason of action, and determines itself freely. It is evident, says the doctor, that the divine volitions are accompanied by goodness and wisdom ; but it proceeds immediately from his will, that things please God, that is, are good, for many things are not agreeable to his wisdom and goodness, purely because he did not will them ; and while he does not will any thing, it cannot be good. We must not, therefore, attend to such as declare that God chooses things because they are good, as if goodness and the greater good which he perceives in objects could determine his will.

Dr. King having thus freed the will of God from any restraint, which motives arising from perfect wisdom, and the independent essential difference of things might lay on it, triumphs in the having destroyed fate and necessity, and in the having given an establishment to perfect liberty : he supposes it to be agreeable to the divine Will to communicate this blessing to all his intelligent creatures ; he challenges the experience of mankind to attest the enjoyment of such a liberty ; but, however, he chuses to rest on the opinion

opinion of the vulgar concerning it, who, by the bye, never form any notion either of philosophical liberty, or philosophical necessity, but are content with the idea of a power of action, agreeable to will; because, says the doctor, they follow the natural sense of the mind; and though they be dull enough in forming long deductions, yet in such things as are the immediate objects of sense and experience, they are often more acute than philosophers themselves.

In explaining the signs and properties of this power, as it is experienced in the human mind, a variety of whimsical instances* are referred to by the doctor; and examples of volitions given, which he construes to have been made independent of, and in contradiction to the distinctions which the mind is supposed to frame of good and evil. But the doctor plumes himself particularly on the

* Most of these whimsical instances to which Dr. King refers, are plainly the effects of madness; an article in the history of mental diseases, of which the doctor seems so entirely ignorant, as also of the opinion of the judicious concerning this terrible malady, as to assert, that he only is mad who is not able to deduce one idea from another, nor make any observations on what he sees.

consciousness which attends good and evil actions, to evince to men that they have such an active principle within themselves.

On the principle of such a predominant power, and independent capability of enjoyment, one is at a loss to know of what use the understanding is of, and, indeed, it is considered as so very subordinate a faculty by the doctor, that the choice of the will often constrains it to take evil things for good, and forces it to admit falsities for truth; but this the doctor does not consider as an improper degradation, because the senses being natural faculties, have, according to his estimation, as high a rank in the human machine as the understanding, and he subjects the senses to the same imperious dominion.

As this singular description of the independent and predominant power of the will is made with the intention of accounting for the necessity of moral evil, it becomes incumbent on the doctor to show on what reason, and on what grounds, infinite wisdom should bestow so dangerous a faculty on a finite and imperfect creature, whose dependent state must be necessarily exposed to great suffering, from blind and errone-

ous elections. This the doctor attempts to do by premising, that our chief happiness depends upon it; for nothing can be absolutely agreeable to us but what is chosen: here then we find a perverseness which is too sturdy for the power of God to subdue. In the enumeration of those causes by which the will falls into undue election, we find error or ignorance, inadvertency or negligence, levity, or the giving too great an indulgence to the exercise of election, contracted habits and other appetites, implanted in us by nature, which, though they cannot determine the will, yet they are the causes from whence it takes a handle to determine itself.

Dr. King, after having expressed himself as entirely satisfied in his solution of the inferior difficulty, physical evil, by a necessity naturally annexed to things imperfect in their nature, acknowledges the following question to be a harder point of philosophical speculation, viz. whence comes moral evil, i. e. those that are not necessary, if they be said to be necessary; how are they free, if they be said to be not necessary; why does God permit them? The latter seems repugnant to the goodness

of God; the former to the nature of a free agent ?

In answer to the difficulties in which this question is involved, as stated by the doctor himself, he supposes, that if our knowledge was as extensive in intellectual as in corporeal nature, we should find as much superior evil in the prevention of the use of free will, as we must acknowledge would arise from the smaller multiplicity of animal life, if the evils were restrained which arise from matter and motion. However, even with the limitations of human knowledge, and the short-sightedness of human sagacity, he thinks he can show, that more evils would necessarily arise from withdrawing or restraining the use of free will, than from the permitting the abuse of it.

In examining this important question, the doctor allows, that God might have prevented moral evil, if he had refused to create any free being; but this, says the doctor, would be making the world a mere machine. Now the divine goodness applauds itself in its works; and the more anything resembles God, and the more it is self-sufficient, it is to be esteemed so much

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the more agreeable to its author: but any one may understand how much any thing which moves itself pleases itself, and is capable of receiving and returning a favour; and how much such a world is preferable to one that does nothing and makes no return, unless by the force of some external impulse. Elections, says the doctor somewhat oddly, are only esteemed evils, because they lead us into natural evils; for if an election contain nothing absurd or prejudicial, it is not a wrong one. Hatred of God, rebellion against his commands, murder, theft, lying, are sins, because they are hurtful to ourselves or others; because they deprive us of natural good, and lead to evil. Elections, therefore, are wrong and undue, on account of the natural evils which attend them; natural evils then are greater than moral, for that which makes any thing bad must necessarily be worse itself. But free will is better than natural appetites, and a gift more worthy the Deity to bestow; it is not, therefore, to be denied to the creatures, on account of the concomitant evils, any more than the natural appetites and propensities: both of them, indeed, sometimes lead us into the same evils, but

with this difference, that the one, viz. the natural appetites, load us with evils by necessity; but the other, viz. free will, not of necessity, but only if we please. Dr. King now magnifies all the advantages of his idol, free will, as defined by himself, as the only gift which could set us above fate; and those evils with which, in the nature of things, we are from all quarters surrounded; and proceeds to answer the doubts of those who are desirous of the pleasures and the advantages of free election, without the power of committing sin, i. e. a liberty restrained, by nature, within certain bounds, so as never to extend to evil.

To this plausible objection the doctor finds his answer, in the positions which he has himself laid down, in the real indifference of things, independent of that exalted pleasure which attends freedom of choice, i. e. that objects are not chosen because they are good, but become good because they are chosen: he rejects, as a grievous servitude, the being necessarily determined by the understanding; although, according to his own acknowledgment, if elections may be made as we please, the wisdom and the goodness whereby they are to be governed,

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ed, ought to be infinite; for if the line be finite a point may be pitched on beyond the bounds of its limitations. And, in like manner, if the wisdom and goodness of the agent be finite, the choice may be made without, and beyond it, which is amiss; and this kind of imperfection, viz. the power of sinning, is proper and peculiar to every finite being who has the privilege of will. But, continues the doctor, as the faculty of pleasing itself, by elections, cannot be determined to good by objects, since goodness is not always an absolute quality in things; nor by the understanding, since many things may be chosen, in which the understanding can perceive no good, it is necessary for the very exercise of election, and for the enjoyment of happiness, that the will should be absolutely free, and capable of pleasing itself by its choice.

To the query which some have made, why God does not interpose his omnipotence, and occasionally restrain the will from depraved and ruinous elections? the doctor asserts, that more and greater evils would arise from such an interposition than from the abuse of free will; that it would be a greater violence done to nature, than to

prevent or impede the motions of the sun; that a free agent is a more noble being than the sun; the laws of its nature are to be esteemed more sacred, and not to be changed without a greater miracle; and, perhaps, such a change would prove no less pernicious to the intellectual system, than the sun's standing still would to the natural. He doubts whether God can change elections by any other method than the usual way of exciting them, by the means of reward and punishment; and, that if such a change was effected, by such a physical impulse as the query points out, the experiment would be fatal, and no less weaken the confidence of men in regard to their security, than an interruption in the settled course of natural causes. Besides, God made the world in order to have something on which to exercise his attributes externally, which proposed end would not be so well answered, if they were exercised in the directing such beings as were merely passive and void of all motion; but by setting aside, or suspending the exercise of his power, and attaining his ends, by prudence only, and the mere dexterity of acting and bringing to pass that so many jarring wills, depending on them-

themselves alone, should yet conspire together to promote the good of the universe, he gives full scope for his wisdom.

To the objections which arise from Dr. King's hypothesis on the inefficacy of prayer, and the supernatural assistance which is supposed to be given by the operations of grace, the doctor, in order to keep within the bounds of orthodoxy, does allow, in some cases, and under certain conditions, such an assistance as may restore to its pristine excellence the depraved faculty of the will; and that through the efficacy of prayer, certain appointed agents may watch over the affairs of men, and relieve their wants.

On that fruitful subject for unavailing complaint, and philosophical observation, the scarcity of happy persons, and the general corruption of mankind, the doctor adheres to the position which he laid down in his Treatise on Natural Evil, that existence is a blessing of so transcendent a nature, that it is capable of being termed a good, however loaded with the burden of vice, sickness, and pain; and as such is a gift worthy of perfect benevolence to bestow: he asserts, that moderate happiness

piness is attained by the far greater number of persons who are able to please themselves by the power of election, though they do not always perceive from what source they derive their pleasure. As a proof that men please themselves with choosing, though they are not aware that things please because they are chosen, he instances some of those strong incentives to volition, which have no manner of connection with the appetites or the necessities of nature; such as gaming, the dire lust of rule, avarice, and the like. The doctor allows, that the abused power of election must, in the nature of things, be productive of universal ill consequences, especially in the person of a king and governor; and that a father may beget children to inherit his diseases and infirmities as well as his goods; but still, with Mandeville, he pleads the utility of vice, by asserting, that private vices are public benefits: for it is certain, he says, that God does not permit any bad elections, but such as may be reconciled with the good of the whole system. Men have their proper use and station, and in order to fill it commodiously, they were to be created of such a nature and disposition,

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as might easily be corrupted by vice. However, the doctor asserts, that crimes and vices are very few, in comparison with the free agents, and may contribute to the good of the whole no less than natural corruption does to the preservation of the system; that one man's fault is often corrected by the vices of another; and the deformity stamped on the works of God by the wickedness of some, is often obliterated by the supervening iniquity of others: by the vitiated elections of some, a stop is put to the wickedness of many; and the virtue and happiness of a great many are confirmed, and increased by the misery of a few; and so long as the whole comes to no harm, it is fit to allow every one the use of his own will, and let them suffer for their sins.

Dr. King having thus wielded the weapons of argument, in the defence of Providence, with great imaginary dexterity, boasts that he has fully answered the famous strong objection of Epicurus to the government of a God, with the existence of evil: and though he does allow that there may be, in the universe, such existences as finite free agents, not so liable to abuse the power of election as man, yet he still maintains that

that God could not have created matter and motion without allowing contrariety and corruption in things, or any free agent without a power of sinning.

As it does not appear that Dr. King has been more successful in the investigation of the cause of moral than of natural evil, or that he has completely answered the famous objection of Epicurus to the government of a God, with the existence of evil, we shall take the same freedom in examining this part of his treatise, on the origin of evil, as we have already taken with the first, and see what rational objections lie to those principles on which he has attempted the weighty and sublime task of vindicating the ways of God to man.

To the first head of Dr. King's observations on this important subject, it is to be observed, that the subjecting the counsels of God to the mere power and predominancy of will, unrestrained and undirected by the unerring guidance of infinite wisdom, is very derogatory to the honour of those counsels, and to the honour of the divine character. Nor does the doctor mend the matter at all, by giving room for the exercise of this wisdom, in the assortment and

and regulation of things, in such a manner as may correspond with the first choice, which, from the indifference which the doctor pretends to establish in the nature of principles, and in his sense of the independency of will to every motive without itself, must have taken its rise from chance ; a principle which can have no existence in the divine conduct. For if the indifference which the doctor contends for, were to be admitted, it is chance alone to whom the creatures are indebted for all the good which they enjoy, in present, and all which may be in store for them ; because out of the variety of different casualties which may be affirmed to be in chance, if one of the adverse kind had affected the lot of created beings, all things might have been made for misery, instead of good ; and thus talking of the divine volitions, on the system of creation, being accompanied by the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator, is, according to the doctor's sense of things, talking nonsense ; for in what manner can goodness or wisdom be exercised in the choice of things, which are in themselves indifferent ? It is also to

to be observed, that to talk of God's being pleased with his own will, independent of any good in the objects of volition, is to lower him beneath the rational part of the lowest of his intelligent creatures, man, and to put him on a footing with the insane and the infant part of this species. That to fore-warn men from attending to such as declare, that God chooses things because they are good, as if goodness, and the greater good of objects, could determine his will, is a manner of writing which would carry the air of impiety, if it had not been used by a divine whose good intentions are as conspicuous as the error of his opinions. That as we see men continually change their will, there is, on this ground of reasoning, no security or assurance of that immutability which we all believe to be in God; for if things only please God, because he wills them, and if such a pleasure as the doctor supposes is annexed to mere volition, the volition of creating a system of things, in which there is good, may please God to-day; and another, in which there is no good, may please him to-morrow; and thus the stability of the universe may give place to a

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continual rotation from worse to better, and from better to worse; and, indeed, from the very best to the very worst.

The doctor's position, that if there was not a self-moving power in the will, independent of causes from without itself, the universe could never have had a being from an author so absolutely and completely happy in himself as not to stand in the least need of any addition from external things, must be considered as derogatory to the transcendent excellence of that author, who, from a motive of disinterested benevolence, takes delight in communicating every possible degree of his perfections and his happiness to his creatures. Thus the doctor, in endeavouring to emancipate the divine will from what he erroneously regards as a derogatory compulsion, degrades the divine attributes of wisdom and goodness into a principle of interested action, and destroys that principle of reasoning on which the immutability of God's counsels depends. But in him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning; and the reason is plain, for, through all the wide extent of possible differences in the nature of things, there can be but one best, and that

that one best will be perceived by infinite intelligence, and become the permanent election of infinite wisdom, and infinite goodness. The subjection to this necessity, is the peculiar glory of the divine character; and as the nature of that absolute freedom which the doctor supposes, were it a possible quality, would reflect disgrace on every rational being who possessed it; so the nearer approaches which all finite creatures make to the perfections of their Creator, the more they will be brought under the blessed subjection of being necessarily determined in their volitions, by right principles of conduct.

On Dr. King's position, that God has communicated what he calls the blessing of an absolute freedom of will to man, it may be maintained on the soundest principles of argument, that when the volitions of God had so far taken place, as to introduce into the system of the universe a rational, that is, a moral agent; he could not, without depriving him of every principle on which moral agency is founded, so far deceive his sensitive and intellectual powers, or affect his mind in such a manner, as to prevent his distinguishing the essential difference which

which lies in the nature of things ; because the perception of the essential difference which lies in the nature of things is necessarily annexed to the quality of reason, and man, were he deprived of this perception, must be deprived of the quality to which it is annexed. Now the perception of the human mind of the essential difference, which lies in the nature of things, will direct it to prize some as objects good, and others to regard as evil : this distinction, therefore, which the intelligent principle in man must direct him to make, will lead him to regard the one object with desire, and the other with aversion ; and this must totally remove that indifference from his volitions, on which the doctrine of an absolute freedom of will rests. It is true, that God, had he thought proper, might have acted physically on man, and made him either necessarily moral, or necessarily immoral ; but when he bestowed on him the privilege of free agency, under the guidance of reason, he necessarily exposed the conduct of that agency to the errors which arise from an ill informed understanding, or an understanding mischievously affected by the strength of those appetites, and the impulses of those passions, which proceed from all the various sensi-

In regard to Dr. King's challenge of the experience of all mankind to attest the enjoyment of such an absolute liberty, or rather such an absolute indifference, on the essential distinctions which they must make between what they regard as good, and what they regard as evil, the universal voice of mankind proclaim the contrary. The vulgar, as has been already observed, never consider the question of philosophical or moral necessity; but take freedom in the sense only of the liberty of acting as they will; and those in a higher style, who contend for absolute liberty, a principle of action which they cannot, however, render intelligible, agree with the vulgar; and the necessitarian in those distinctions which the mind frames on the essential difference which lies in those objects which present themselves to her perception, and which form the objects of her volition: else why have we schools to train our youth in knowledge, and in habits of virtue? why are treatises written and encouraged, which are adapted to inform the understanding, in a

manner as shall enable her to be a proper guide to the will? why are punishments annexed to the transgression of laws, but to serve as motives to correct the mischief of depraved elections? why are our youth warned to fly from the snares of temptation, and to arm their reason against the power of their passions and appetites, by strengthening the one with intellectual nourishment, and starving the growth of the other by preserving the salutary habitudes of moderation and forbearance? and why does the doctor himself sometimes picture this life as unfavourable to virtue, on account of the hostile impulses which proceed from the objects which surround us?

In regard to the variety of whimsical volitions which the doctor construes to have been made independent of, and in contradiction to the distinctions which the mind is supposed to frame of good, it may be observed, that of those which the doctor construes to have been made independent of these distinctions, such distinctions may take place, though they are too trifling to be observed: of two eggs which are served up to a person, there can never be such a parity in all their circumstances, as not to

induce a choice, either from size, colour, or situation; when a man is to chuse a walk in a garden, though his imagination should not be affected in a manner to create a warm preference in his mind, yet it is always some circumstance of length, breadth, vicinity, surface, or sociality, which determines his choice; and as to the pertinaciousness of keeping to a choice made with frigidity of sentiment, this arises from temper, viz. a peevish resentment on being turned out of our course by any obstruction from, without, or from the tenaciousness of pride. It is also to be observed, that it is so unnatural to make any volitions, without a very obvious perceptive motive, that when objects are presented to the mind, void of those allurements necessary to remove frigidity of sentiment, a painful contest ensues between the necessity of making a choice, and the aversion of the mind to put the will in action: in all probability it is the frigidity of sentiment alone which prevents the inattentive mind from noticing the prevailing motive; but be this as it may, it shows that the mere pleasure of willing has no charms for a rational agent; and even supposing that in some very peculiar situations, a press-ing

ing necessity may force volitions, where objects are indifferent, this can never render all objects indifferent, and destroy the nature of all distinctions; nor will it follow, that if volitions are capable of taking place from necessity, without other motive but the necessity itself, that volitions can take place in opposition to the power of all motives.

On the subject of those examples which the doctor brings to show, that volitions are made in contradiction to the power of all motives, that is, contrary to every colour of interest, to the natural love of life, the natural dread of pain, or the importunate calls of appetite; it is to be observed, that he has borrowed largely from the Stoicks without a comprehensive knowledge of their meaning; for the rational interest which they suppose to be annexed to such exercises of fortitude and self-denial, does not arise from the mere satisfaction of the enjoyment of choice, but in the consciousness of having made a good one*, that is, one which is agreeable to the obligations of a rational agent,

* Epictetus asserts, that the pleasure of the soul doth not consist in the enjoyment of choice, and says,

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agent, whose duty it is to be determined always according to the moral fitness of things. Such determinations, therefore, they construe to be a proper accordment of their volitions to the will of the Deity; and they argue, that in proportion as we exert the energetic powers of the mind in the contest between reason and the force of appetites and passions, that is, the greater the difficulties and oppositions which the energies of the mind has subdued, the greater will be our rational satisfaction: they do not, therefore, place the rational interest in the exerting without motives the power of will, but in having exerted this power by the impulse of the best motives; and in the consequences which follow the having made the best choice, viz. that the actions which follow such volitions produce good habits; that habits, from a circumstance inseparable to these qualities, produce at first ease, and then pleasure, accompanied with an infinite variety of different modes of good, which

that there must subsist some principle essence of good, in the attainment of which, we shall enjoy the pleasure of the soul. *Discourses of Epictetus*, translated by Mrs. Carter, quarto edit. p. 245.

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attend the habitual course of proper actions, and the volitions which naturally proceed from all these causes, in conformity to the first best choice, encourages, invigorates, and illuminates the mind in a manner as to produce conviction of the importance of the victory.

On the subject of that mode of feeling, called consciousness of ill or well doing, the greater part of mankind know nothing of that principle from which volitions proceed; and, as Mr. Locke very well says, when men have once adopted a rule for moral conduct, they will, in the admeasurement of their actions with this rule, naturally condemn themselves in the same proportion as they find their actions square with this rule, or deviate from it. This is the true and only origin of a consciousness of the having committed evil in a vulgar mind; whereas, in a philosophical one, it is a returning sense of the moral fitness of things, and a correspondent regret for the misfortune of having deviated into the paths of vice and error. But as Dr. King, in the succeeding remark, supposes that the will has such a predominant power over the understanding, as to constrain it to

falsities for truth, it may give rise to a doubt, whether this same mode of feeling, called consciousness, which one would be apt to imagine must necessarily proceed from the determinations of the judgment, is not liable with its original mover, the understanding, to an equal degree of subjection to the will:

On the strange position, that the Deity cannot, by any of the innumerable modes in which infinite power is capable of being exercised, give happiness to his creatures, without bestowing on them the dangerous and perverse privilege which the doctor so strenuously contends for, it may be considered, whether it might not have been agreeable to perfect benevolence to secure the happiness of the creature, man, by such useful deceptions as are often put on the no less perverse ignorance of children, and to have indulged him in the fancied enjoyment of the free choice of objects, without subjecting him to the misery of making a wrong one, by the real endowment of this dangerous gift.

Though Dr. King qualifies the enumeration of those causes, by which he allows, that the will

will does fall into undue elections, viz. error or ignorance, inadvertency or negligence, levity or the giving too great an indulgence to the exercise of election, contracted habits, and other appetites implanted in us by nature; with the observation, that though these circumstances cannot determine the will, yet they are the causes from whence it takes a handle to determine itself; yet it is to be observed, that by such a concession he lays the foundation of argument for the overthrow of all his principles. For in what can error or ignorance consist, but in the incapacity of not making proper distinctions on those subjects which tend to happiness or misery; and where is the room for distinctions, if all things are necessarily indifferent to the Creature but the privilege and power of willing? In what can inadvertence or negligence in this case consist, but in the not attending to the dictates of the understanding? Now, where can be the necessity of attending to dictates which have no power of determining? in what can levity consist, but from the same cause? where is the power of contracted habits, if volition is altogether independent of motive?

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and in what can consist the force of the appetites, if all the senses are, in the order of things, subjected to the dominion of the will?

On the manner in which Dr. King attempts to answer the difficulties which lie involved in the question, whence comes moral evil? it will be necessary to remind the reader of that same wonderful magic wand which is so efficacious in the removal of those difficulties which are of too insuperable a nature to be overcome by the ordinary course of argument. A proper limitation of the power of God, has served both the ancient and modern philosophers as a weapon and a shield against the force of inquisitive reason. It is recorded by Plutarch, that the philosopher Heraclitus gave to war the respectful title of the Father, and King, and Lord of all things; and that he asserted, that when Homer prayed that strife be banished from gods and men, that he was not aware that he was cursing the generation of all things, because they deduce their strife out of contest and antipathy. It is thus that the ancients persuaded themselves, that they had fathomed the depth of that mystery

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in nature, the evils arising from the strife of men and animals; and that principle of destruction and hostile relations which runs through the whole line of animal nature, and becomes reciprocal in man. The jaws of the lion, the poison of the rattlesnake, the sword of the conqueror, and every instrument of destruction, say these reasoners, may be said incidentally to prepare the way for generation, and that not only by making room for new comers, but by furnishing fresh materials towards their respective production.

It is not surprising that the opinions of the ancients on the subject of the power of the Deity, should fall very short of infinite energy; but we see them in some manner followed in the narrowness of their conceptions, even by Aristotle: and what is yet more surprising, many of the moderns have persisted in the childish conceits of their teachers, the ancients, though directly contrary to all the experience which may be gained from an attentive examination of that part of the system of creation which lies level to human observation. If the quick succession of generation had been the end

end proposed by the omnipotent Creator, it is plain this end might have been obtained without such a sacrifice of the happiness or the virtue of the creature as should induce violence and bloodshed; for the natural life of all the animal creation, might have been limited to such a duration as might, in exact proportion, have squared with the rapidity of the destined successions. And as we find that the Deity has made putridity agreeable and wholesome to several of the animal species, he might undoubtedly have made it so to all, and thus the life of the living might have been supported by the carcases of the dead, without introducing destruction from violence, or making room for generation out of contest and antipathy. We ought undoubtedly to content ourselves without too curious an examination into such final causes, as must ever lie hid in the unsearchable ways of God, and conclude, that these final causes have a benevolent end, and those apparent evils are the necessary means to produce good.

But to return from this digression to our examination of Dr. King's observations. There can surely be no propriety in the opinion,

nion, that the creatures, however they may be made self-sufficient, can be put in the situation of returning, in any sense of the word, the favours which they have received from the Creator; and the establishment of such a principle of duty, either induces a motive capable of determining the will, or, though the principle is established, its capability of determining the will is denied. Now, on what principle of reasoning can it be maintained that the favour received by the creature can in any way be returned, if its volitions are not influenced by the sense of its duty and its obligations? This observation of the doctor then, were we to grant him his premises, can never militate against the power of motives, but only against that necessity which proceeds from a physical impulse.

In regard to Dr. King's observation, that certain gross crimes, such as hatred of God, rebellion against his commands, murder, theft, &c. would be no sins, if they were not hurtful to ourselves, or others; we do not well comprehend the idea which Dr. King has formed on the nature of guilt, and moral

moral turpitude ; for surely, in our sense of things, it would be a criminal sentiment to hate God, and a criminal conduct to disobey his commands, even if we were sure of impunity from the infinite extent of his goodness ; and surely murder can never be regarded as an innocent action, even if the perpetrator of it were certain of escaping the gallows, and was as certain that the murdered person would be received into the mansions of the blessed, on the instant of his departure from this life. Dr. King, however, is not singular in his opinion on the last mentioned instance of conduct ; for Dr. Moore, in the entertaining History of his Travels, relates a singular incident which happened in Switzerland. During the doctor's residence in this country, a certain person, whose brain had been disordered by the prophetic warning of an old woman, that he would end his life on a gallows, wanted to get rid of the continual and insupportable perturbation of mind which the prophecy had occasioned, by accelerating his fate : being, however, a conscientious man, his mind revolted against suicide, and in the search of the means of procuring death, without incur-

incurring criminality, he murdered the child of his friend, or master, because the innocent state of childhood seemed to secure the immediate happiness of the victim. The idea of the evil which would ensue from the affliction of the parents and friends of the child, had unfortunately no place in the poor man's considerations on the subject, and the magistrate, either out of indulgence to the poor man's phrenzical desire, or in compliance with the rigid and unalterable dictates of fate, gave a legal authority to the office of the executioner, instead of supplying the wretched creature with the means to cure his frenzy, and directing such a confinement and restraint, as might deprive him of the future power of hurting himself or others.

It is worthy observation, that this unlucky quality, necessity, is so obviously annexed to certain strong propensities to deprave volition, that its greatest opposers are often obliged to allow it with all its force. The natural appetites, says the doctor, load us with evil, by necessity; but the other, viz. free will, not of necessity, but only if we please.

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The observations of Dr. King, that a free agent in the midst of hunger and thirst, nay, death itself, has wherewithal to please itself, and to blunt the edge of all those evils, may be applied to a moral agent on the considerations of a conscientious discharge of duty; but as freedom cannot, in any sense of the word, square with necessity, it is not easy to comprehend how a free choice, and a choice forced by the necessity of an occasion, can agree.

Dr. King rejects as a grievous servitude, the being necessarily determined by the understanding; because the understanding always represents objects as they are: but in rejecting the principle of forbearance and self-denial out of his principle of conduct, the doctor surely forgets that he also deprives his free agent of merit in any sense of the word; for what merit can there be in always acting according to choice, independent of any other consideration? And for the grievous servitude and anxiety which the doctor supposes to be annexed to the subjecting our volitions to the dictates of our understanding, there is not perhaps a more pleasant, or a more salutary task that a person can impose on his mind, than the en-

gaging it in a constant attention to the interests of its importance and peace, and in searching out of all the objects which present themselves to its choice, the preferable from the less preferable, the good from the bad.

As to the doctor's assertion, that more and greater evils would arise from such an occasional interposition of divine power, as might restrain the will from depraved and ruinous elections, as such an interposition as this, could certainly be effected by Omnipotence, in such a manner as might leave the agent in an equal belief of his freedom as he has at present, we do not perceive the truth of the assertion. And as to the doctor's doubts, whether God can change elections by any other than the usual way of exciting them by the means of rewards and punishments; and that if such a change, effected by such a physical impulse as the query points out, the experiment would be fatal, and no less weaken the confidence of men, in regard to their security, than an interruption in the settled course of natural causes; we must, in answer to these doubts, repeat that entire confidence in the unlimited power of God, which all the wonders of the creation im-

press on our mind. And we cannot help thinking, that the only mischief which could arise from the obvious change of our elections, by arbitrary and physical means, would have the contrary effect to what the doctor supposes, viz. the creating such an assurance in the divine assistance, as would relax the vigilance of attention, weaken the energies of the mind, and effect such an indolent supineness, as would be inimical to all the powers of moral agency. But we are much surprised that the doctor, who totally rejects the doctrine of motives, should talk of exciting virtue by the means of reward and punishment.

On the position, that God made the world in order to have something on which to exercise his abilities externally, it must be observed that this position seems to militate against that complete and independent happiness which is supposed to be inseparable from the nature of the first Cause; and the notion that God gave his creatures freedom of will, in the doctor's sense of the word, in order to create means for the exertion of his prudence and ability in their government, will admit of the comparison of setting up men of straw, in order to amuse one's self with fighting with them;

them; or, in other words, the setting one's wits against a child. Nor can we conceive how a providential government can on this principle be effected, without such interpolations as the doctor rejects as mischievous or impracticable. The doctor has undoubtedly read the proverb founded on the experience of ages, that those whom the gods are determined to destroy, they make mad; nor can we see how such a providential government as the doctor contends for, could be carried on, or men made the authors of their own punishment, as we perceive often to be the case, without restraining the doctor's supposed freedom of election; or, in the necessitarian language, presenting such motives to the mind, as are of sufficient prevalence to impel the destituted volitions.

Though we cannot see how the doctor can reconcile the rejection of a providential government with the admittance of a supernatural assistance, by the operations of grace; nor how he can in any sense reject the supernatural and irresistible operations of grace and necessity, and maintain his opinions of election and reprobation; nor annex any idea to what he calls the depraved faculties of the will, yet we can understand what is meant by the depraved

or invilitated faculties of the judgment, because this depravity takes its source from that indolence and inattention which militates against the exercise of this faculty; but how the pristine excellence of the powers of volition can be depraved by a vigorous exercise of these powers, we cannot comprehend. It must not pass without observation, that the doctor, when he allows the efficacy of prayer does in express terms say, that God, when applied to, interposes in matters relating to the will, and in so doing, the doctor determines the point, in opposition to the doubts he had formerly raised respecting such a power being within the limits of Omnipotence; and at the same time he admits of a principle in God's providential government, which, if firmly believed, may fill weak minds with despair, if they do not find the expected success attend their supplications. Now the rational opinion of the efficacy of prayer over the volitions of men, seems to rest on these grounds, that the frame of mind which induces prayer in an agent, must proceed from some dictate of the understanding, which points out the impropriety, the danger, and the mischief which may attend the present course of his volitions;

volitions; and this dictate of the understanding brings on correspondent exertions in the agent, which may, or may not, be strengthened by divine assistance, as divine Wisdom thinks fit; but which assistance will, in all probability, never be given, or, if given, be suffered to take place, without the correspondent exertions of the agent.

To the doctor's position, that existence is a blessing of so transcendent a nature, that it is capable of being termed a good, however loaded with the burden of vice, sickness, and pain, and as such, is a gift worthy of perfect benevolence to bestow; we cannot assent on the reason, that moral evil carries a consequence beyond the limits of the grave, and that existence, in all possible situations, is not considered as a blessing, the examples of the multitude of suicides which have saddened the annals of all societies, barbarous and civilized, prove, beyond a doubt; nor do we believe that moderate happiness is attained by the far greater number of persons, from the power of free elections, in the doctor's sense of the word: on the contrary, we think that every error in elections, especially of the moral kind, carries with it consequences inimical

to every principle of happiness. And to the proofs which the doctor brings to illustrate his position, that things please merely because they are chosen, we must object to the truth of the inference. The incentive to gaming arises from the lust of gain, and its pleasure from that acquired velocity in the circulation of the animal spirits, which the blended emotion which accompanies the equally balanced passions of fear and hope, raises in the mental frame, positive power affords the means to accomplish all our desires, and to attain the gratification of all the passions of the mind, and the appetites of sense; consequently, the dire lust of rule must, more or less, have place in the affections of every human heart: and if the doctor had examined the privileges which attend power, he would have found that they must completely square with the affections of a creature, whose pleasures solely arise from having its will. As to avarice, according to the doctor's own just definition of this vicious affection, it is a gradual progress of the love of money, as a means to procure the gratifications of sense and passion, to the love of the mere possession of these means, at the very expence of these

these gratifications from the pleasure annexed to the idea, that all the means by such possession are within the limits of the power of the possessor: this vice, therefore from its sordid nature, is peculiarly distinguished from an eager and inordinate desire of wealth, accompanied with as eager a desire of spending it.

We agree with the doctor as to the universal ill consequences which attend vice; but cannot, with the doctor, admit of the contradiction, that private vices are public benefits. We agree with the doctor, that laws were given as means of acquainting free agents with what is expedient for them, and of moving them to a right choice; but cannot with the doctor admit of the contradiction, that it is possible for the will to be moved by means which, in the nature of things, are indifferent to it. We agree with the doctor, that by depraved elections, passions, and affections, the mind may become disabled, and unfit for governing its actions, according to the dictates of right reason; but do not see how these causes can act on a free agent, in the doctor's sense of the word. We agree with the doctor, that nothing happens to good men, which may

not prove a means to greater good, nor to the bad, which may not be for their punishment and reformation; but cannot perceive how these positions suit either, with the doctor's notions of free agency, or with his notion of the state of rewards and punishments, as they take place in another world.

If, according to the doctor's speculation, men, to fill their proper use and station, were created of such a nature and disposition as might easily be corrupted with vice; we cannot help thinking that the Creator puts his creature man to the same use as the Spartans did their slaves, the Helotes; and that the placing men in a condition, and with a disposition which induces a necessity to sin, merely for the advantage of different species of rational existences, is like the Spartans obliging their slaves to commit the vice of inebriety, that they might serve as examples to deter their superiors from indulging in this brutal exercise.

To the doctor's proposition, that the virtue and happiness of a great many are confirmed and increased by the misery of a few, it may be objected, that the examples which the stage of life presents of vicious characters and families, triumphing in the goods

of fortune gained at the expence of all the principles of virtue, are more apt to mislead the judgment and deprave the elections of the species, than the miseries of what he calls a few, are to deter men from the errors of an ill choice. Nor can we look on the deplorable miseries of these few, without a considerable shock to the sympathising principle; in our way of thinking, therefore, and our mode of feeling, we cannot assent to the proposition that Dr. King has fully answered the famous strong objection of Epicurus to the government of a god with the existence of evil; or that he has been more successful in justifying the ways of Providence in his investigation of the cause of moral than of natural evil. But as, in our total dissent from Dr. King's principles and opinions, we have very apparently shown, that the dictates of our judgment are all in favour of the opposite opinion which the doctor takes such pains to elucidate and defend, viz. that we are confirmed in the belief of a moral necessity, to which every moral or rational agent must, in the nature of things, be subjected, we think it incumbent on us, in a treatise directly tending to fix the Immutability of Moral Truth, to state, in as clear a manner as

as we are able, the formidable objections which have been made to this opinion, and to try if we cannot, in our answers to these objections, soften or entirely remove those deep-rooted prejudices which have taken place against this doctrine: a doctrine which, in our opinion, is the only firm basis on which to fix the immutable nature of moral truth, and the only principle of agency on which the practice of morals can be scientifically recommended or explained, in a manner as may bring that which has hitherto, with a few exceptions, rested in theory only into general use.

The list of those formidable objections which have hitherto deterred mankind from a fair investigation of the question respecting those principles of motion, and those causes which impel the volitions of intelligent beings, and produce a correspondent action, are, I believe, all comprised under the following heads.

First, that the allowing no kind of indifference in the powers of volition; but supposing, on the contrary, that no volitions can be made without a cause or motive equal in power to the producing the effect, takes away that liberty which is necessary

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to constitute free agency ; and that if free agency is taken away, that principle of action is taken away which constitutes the nature of merit and demerit : and thus the agent cannot reasonably expect any reward for his good actions, nor any punishment for his crimes, independent of the consequences necessarily flowing from the nature of the actions themselves, through the relation of beings which take place in the terrestrial system : therefore all grounds or reasons for punishment and reward in another state of existence is taken away, or God must be supposed to act partially and unreasonably in the dispensation of them.

Secondly, that on the doctrine of impelling causes, all actions must, in metaphysical reasoning, be traced upwards, till they rest in the source of all motion, the Deity ; because, in the regular concatenation of cause and effect, all proceeding causes must take their being, as effects from the existences of first causes ; therefore this is making God the author of sin.

Thirdly, that as no positive rewards and punishments can, in the reason of things, be justly given or inflicted on agents who are

are not free, from God the original dispenser of good and evil to his creatures, so neither can they be justly given or inflicted by man to his fellow creatures. Thus the coercion of laws will have no ground in justice; punishments will become cruelties; rewards will be partialities; and praise and dispraise, childish and puerile expressions of human sentiment.

Fourthly, that if the doctrine of moral necessity should meet with the universal assent of mankind, and be entertained as a principle of rational belief, it would weaken the sentiment of religion, by degrading the character of the Deity; relax every principle of attention to rational interest, by introducing an opinion, that all creatures are chained to the foot of fate, and had it not in their power to make their own fortunes, nor to meliorate or aggravate the evils of a pre-determined destiny.

Fifthly, that by introducing a negation of all merit or demerit, the pleasing sense of self-approbation will be taken away, and with it the more useful sense of remorse and shame, those strong incentives to repentance and amendment.

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The first objection, which supposes that such a principle of election could be established, and such a power could be given by God to rational agents, as is in any sense, independent of motives, militates against every rational conception of moral agency, and implies one of those manifest contradictions which form the only necessary limitations to the power of God. Intelligence and wisdom are attributes as inseparable with the first Cause, as the physical necessity of existence ; and it is the peculiar nature of intelligence to discern all the agreements and disagreements which necessarily exist in the nature of things, and of wisdom to be determined by the necessary superiority which is inseparable to that which is best, over that which is not equally good : thence, in the possession of such attributes of intelligence and wisdom, we perceive a necessity inseparably annexed to perfect intelligence and perfect wisdom. When the volitions of God had so far taken place as to introduce into the system of the universe a rational agent, this rational agent, from the nature of the privilege of rationality, must be, as far as such a privilege is suffered the course

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of its free action, endued with the power of perceiving the agreement and disagreement of those ideas which lie within the compass of its perceptive qualities. Here we find a rational freedom to exist in the principle of necessity; and in our farther investigation, we shall find that the perception of the agreement and disagreement of things, subjects the rational principle to the necessity of making a determination in favour of that which it perceives to be superior, to that which it perceives to be inferior; and this determination of the rational principle, must determine the volition of a rational agent. Thus we see that God, in the same proportional extent as he gave the privilege of reason, and allowed to this privilege its free course, necessarily subjected the volitions of the creature to the necessity of being determined by that which the rational principle perceived to be the best.

If a larger portion of reason had been given, a more accurate sagacity would have taken place in the determinations of the agent; and this would necessarily have subjected his volitions to the necessity of the best choice, and more especially if no hostile motives

motives of determination had arisen from the impulses of passion, and the powerful cravings of the appetites. But the appetites and the passions are such useful incentives to action in the frame of human mechanism, that they appear to be a necessary part of the constitution of such a being as man. They are also necessary to the trial, and the very existence of meritorious virtue. For if man is placed on this terrestrial globe as in a nursery or a foil, aptly fitted to give strength, vigour, and a more advanced maturity to his young and infirm reason; if he is placed on this terrestrial globe as in a school, adapted to the advantages of a practical experience; if he is surrounded with difficulties, dangers, and hostile powers, for the purposes of enlarging his experience, and inducing a state of trial of that virtue which his reason and his experience enables him to acquire; we shall, on this view of the subject, have reason to admire the wisdom and the goodness of God, for bestowing on man the privilege of a rational agency, at the same time that he exposed his conduct to the errors which arise from an ill-informed understanding, or an understanding mischievously affected

by the strength of those appetites, and the impulses of those passions, which proceed from all the various sensitive and mental qualities which exist in the human frame.

On the nature of merit and demerit, which is such a puzzling question as to introduce a difficulty on the rational motives or grounds for rewards and punishments, it is to be observed, that the nature of merit and demerit, as these differences take place in the relation of man to man, consists in the good or the evil which arises to society, or to private persons, from the conduct of the several individuals of this species. But the nature of merit and demerit in human conduct, when considered in the relation of the creature to the Creator, arises from another source of moral difference.

As all good gifts are derived from God, and consequently all the original powers necessary to form excellence, the nature of merit therefore, as it exists in the conduct of man, when considered in his relation to the Creator, arises from that degree of natural and acquired excellence which enables him to partake of those blessings which attend his progress in virtue, through every stage of his existence; blessings which are,

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by the will of the Creator, necessarily annexed to this progress. The nature of demerit, therefore, in this relation, takes its rise from such a depraved use of the creature's powers, as disables him from partaking of the happy consequences which attend the progress of virtue. And as the perfect benevolence of God will not suffer any of his creatures to sink into an eternal abyss of depravity and corruption, punishment is so necessarily annexed to a flagitious conduct, that it arises out of the natural consequences which attend every depraved volition and correspondent action; and severe and positive punishments are inflicted as sharp, though useful correctives, to awaken the dormant energies of the abused faculties, to revive the powers of depraved reason, to recover all the principles of moral conduct, and to give stability to recovered virtue, by that strong conviction which experience can alone afford.

On this view of the subject, we shall surely find reasonable grounds for the evil which attend erroneous and sinful volitions, with their correspondent actions, through this warfare of life; and also for the rewards,

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and the more positive punishments of another state, which are so awfully announced in the revelations of God to man. But let us try how the principles of merit and demerit, and the reasonable grounds for rewards and punishments, will stand on that absolute indifference to the power of motives, which the maintainers of philosophical liberty suppose to be inherent in the self-moving faculty of the will. Let us suppose then, that volitions are made independent of every external motive; how will the privilege of this perverse and mischievous faculty be capable of creating that difference in the principles of conduct, which squares with our ideas of merit and demerit? One creature wills and acts agreeable to the dictates of virtue and the commands of God; the volitions and the actions of another are quite contrary to these dictates and these commands: but both of them acted with an equal indifference to the power of motives; now in what can the merit of the one consist, or the demerit of the other? And as this self-moving power of the will must always be supposed to possess its indifference to the influence of motives, how is the one more

more advanced in that perfection which insures the stability of virtue, than the other? Where can be the use, or the rapturous pleasures which arise from the improvement of intellect, and the acquirement of good habits? Where can be the transcendent enjoyments which are annexed to the practice and the enlargement of virtue, if its excellency is not of that superior kind to command and to controul volition? For if the perverse nature of this faculty should still remain cold and indifferent to the superiority of every kind of excellency, the virtue and the happiness of the good agent will continue to be as precarious in another state of existence as in this, unless some wholesome restraint is put on so mischievous a freedom; and in this case, according to the idea which has been formed of moral necessity, there is an end to his merit. But it will be said, that the merit of this moral agent lies in having framed all his volitions to the dictates of virtue, and the commands of God. But pray, if all these virtuous volitions did not arise from the power of fate or mere chance, was it not some act of the understanding which pointed out to the agent the beauty and the propriety which lay in these

dictates, and in these commands? Did not the superior excellence of their qualities attract his admiration, warm the affections of his heart, and produce the full conviction of his mind, that his rational interest was all centered in his obedience. If this be the case, how can he be said to have acted independent of motive? If it be not the case, how can he be said to have acted on any other principle but chance, or to have any pretension to merit by such an obedience?

It will be also said, that the demerit of a free agent arises from his having used this self-moving power, in opposition to the divine Will, and that his volitions and correspondent actions have been framed and prosecuted in a direct opposition to the dictates of virtue, and the commands of God. But is it not probable that the understanding of this perverse agent was deficient in its duty, in pointing out to him his rational interest, and that beauty and propriety in intellectual qualities which would have commanded the assent of the mind? and did not this deficiency arise from some defect in its natural and acquired powers, or from these powers having been overborne, and over-ruled by certain hostile impressions, which

which, in affecting the whole mind of the agent, weakened and depraved all its faculties? Or, if the understanding of the agent was not deficient in its duty, did not the hostile impressions arising from the impetus of passions, the overbearing sway of vicious habits and pampered appetites, so disarrange the whole œconomy of the mind of this agent, as to prevent the natural play or action of its faculties, and by this discomposure of his powers, and this disarrangement of intellect, did not these passions, habits, and appetites acquire a force sufficient to become the prevailing and over-ruling motives in all his volitions? If these causes or motives should be allowed to have been of that commanding force, as to have overruled all the dictates of the understanding, and forced from their effects an unnatural assent from the mind, or rather to have produced that unnatural state of the mind which effected an injudicious assent, then it must be allowed, that he did not act independent of motives. But if he did act altogether independent of motives, he must undoubtedly have acted on the mere principle of

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chance, and in this case how can any grounds of demerit be established?

It remains yet to be considered, whether the bestowing this perverse and mischievous faculty of free-will, as it is defined by Dr. King, does afford more reasonable, or indeed as reasonable grounds for punishment in a future state, as the doctrine of moral necessity. Punishment, however sharp and terrible, when used as a corrective, completely squares with human ideas of perfect benevolence and perfect wisdom; but let those who allow that these glorious attributes are inherent in the divine character, reconcile if they can, in a satisfactory manner, to such attributes the inflicting infinite, that is, eternal punishment on finite transgressions, and this on a presumed principle of justice, arising from the abuse of a faculty which, in the nature of things, it is not possible for an imperfect being not to abuse. The only solid objection then which lies against the doctrine of moral necessity, is, that it cannot admit of infinite punishment on a principle of justice and benevolence. But the same objection will, on a candid view of the question, be found to lie against

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the doctrine of philosophical liberty; and this is so apparent, that infinite punishment seems to be given up by the disputants on either side of the question, and to be considered as a figurative image of sharp, of long, and inexpressible suffering. And, indeed, Dr. King, in order to accord such dispensation with his hypothesis, and with the ideas of justice and benevolence, is obliged to admit of such a kind of hell as can have no terrors for the licentious and abandoned profligate. However, even the admitting the idea of Dr. King's hell, may be less prejudicial in its effect, than the admitting the idea of such an eternity of torments as is contended for by some religionists. For, instead of serving as a wholesome corrective to the natural incentives to vice, it fills the mind with a horror which obliges it to turn from its contemplation, and is so repugnant to all the moral sentiments of the species, that it either deprives men of their reason, or leads those who are incapable of forming any system of belief for themselves to conclude, that they have been deluded with groundless terrors, and to fall into a scepticism entirely opposite to a religious

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The very popular objection to the doctrine of moral necessity, contained in the following proposition, that it is making God the author of sin, is an objection which, in one sense or other of this affirmation, can never be removed out of any theological system which takes in the consideration of moral evil. For if the bare admittance of moral evil be considered in the light of making God the author of sin, he certainly must appear to be equally the author of sin on the one principle as on the other. For when the matter is traced up to first causes, and the attribute of prescience is admitted to be inherent in the Deity, it will be found that the original cause of sin lay on the one side in giving the creature man a privilege which God saw, by his prescience, must be abused; and, on the other, by not adjusting motives to the qualities of the creatures, in such a manner as should prevent moral turpitude. But as the disputants on both sides of the question very properly agree in this point, that all evil is admitted to induce a greater good, it will be found, on a thorough and

fair investigation of the nature, and extent of this good, that the advantages of the argument lie all on the side of moral necessity: for the one must admit of the sacrifice of individuals to the good of the whole; and the other extends the benevolence of the universal Father of the universe to every one of his creatures. It extends it in a general, and in a particular sense, and instead of adopting that trite observation, "partial evil, universal good," it contends, that the Lord and Giver of all good gifts, to whose omnipotence and wisdom every difficulty gives way, has so benignly and so wisely arranged the established laws of nature, with every circumstance of his providential government, and the concatenation of cause and effect, that they shall, in some measure, in some degree, and in some given time, produce an individual as well as a general happiness.

But in order to do this subject justice, let us enter into a more particular investigation, whether the adjusting motives to the qualities of the creature, in such a manner as should prevent moral turpitude, would so well answer the end of the greatest general and individual happiness, as in the arrangements which are at present found in the
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ordinary course of Providence. In the proper investigation of this subject, we are never to lose sight of the positions, that man is placed on this terrestrial globe, as in a nursery, or a soil aptly fitted to give strength and vigor, and a more advanced maturity to his young and infirm reason; that he is placed on this terrestrial globe as in a school adapted to the advantages of a practical experience; and that he is surrounded with difficulties and hostile powers, for the purpose of enlarging his experience, and inducing a state of trial of that virtue which his reason and his experience enables him to acquire. The reasonableness of these positions are so obvious, that they have been allowed by all the teachers of divinity, and make a part of the orthodox faith; and if they are granted to be true, in what manner could the predicates of these propositions be effected, if man was not placed in a situation, where the prevalent motive for volition might often be the worst motive?

If motives were adjusted in such a manner to the mental and corporeal qualities of man, that he could never be tempted to sin, he could have no experience of the advantages which lie on the side of virtue, when considered with its opposite principle, vice.

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Some species of justice, a general benevolence, a temperance and a patience under the natural evil of sickness, and loss of friends, are the only virtues which could be practised in such a situation. But those higher, more difficult, and more exalted virtues of charity, in the best and most extensive sense of the word, with that high fortitude which supports itself, when assailed by the blended miseries and misfortunes which flow from the united sources of moral and natural evil, could have no place among the virtues of the human species. Neither could the more meritorious virtue of self-devotement to the will of the Deity be exerted, and this when calamities flow in with such an overwhelming tide of woe, as to over-power the dim light of reason, and weaken the comfort of those hopes, formed in the hours of a cooler judgment. It is at this time when the prevailing influence of religious sentiment, by combating a sinful despair, displays its power and efficacy, in such a manner, as to produce the exertion of as high a virtue, as a finite being is, perhaps, capable of. It is such exertions which more particularly frame our minds for the happiness

ness of a future state, which, without the experience of natural and moral evil in this world, would lose much of its transcendent blessedness. Neither would the creature man, for want of such a due experience, attain the proper capacity for filling a superior station in the universe.

The doctrine of a moral necessity is so far from admitting a negation of such strength in the faculties and powers of the mind, as are necessary to oppose the force of that desire or aversion which arises from the continual action of corporeal and mental causes, that its defenders contend for the possession of such a strength in the ordinary powers of the mind, as are adequate to the necessity of every occasion. They contend, that if man has not a power of suspending volition, he has a power of suspending the motion of a correspondent action, till he has taken into due consideration the good or the bad which may exist in the object of the volition, and the consequences which may arise from these differences. They contend, that if the mind of a man is free from the overruling power of certain fixed associations of ideas, he can chuse one subject of contemplation, and discard another. They contend, that

that one association of ideas which appear hostile to his innocence and peace, by stimulating his passions, and provoking his appetites, may, if they are not fixed in the mind by impressions, repeatedly indulged, be either discarded, or new and more friendly associations may be called forth from the store-house of the brain. They contend, that a constant discipline of the mind, and a due exertion of its powers, with habitudes of virtue, will keep the passions and appetites under such a due subjection, as to give to the best motives the necessary prevalent power to impel the best volitions. But when they have made these concessions, or rather avowed these truths, they go no farther; nor can they have the want of candour to deny, but that a bad education, a bad disposition, early acquired habits of the unfavourable kind, strong passions, pampered appetites, inattention to a rational interest, and, above all, an ignorance in the art of disciplining the mind, do all of them act with such a prevalent hostility against the virtue of mankind, as often to create a necessity for perverse volitions and correspondent actions. It is on these grounds of reasoning, that the teachers of the doctrine of a moral neces-

necessity, endeavour to convince mankind of the reality of this principle, and explain the nature of its action, in order to give to their fellow-creatures such lights on the subject of their true interest, as may enable them to form proper systems of mental discipline, and to guard against the dangers arising from an over-confidence, or an inattentive negligence. And it is on these grounds of reasoning, that the author of this Treatise thought it her duty to enter largely into an explanation of the doctrine, and its interesting consequences, before she attempted to give practical rules for the education of both sexes.

By the explanation of those different circumstances in the conduct of human life, which create the two opposite necessities of doing good, and of doing evil, that is of spending the course of existence in the practice of virtue or the indulgence of vice, it will appear, that bad governors, bad parents, bad tutors, bad guardians, and bad company, are the primary authors of all the evil volitions of the species; and that ignorance is a soil in which no uniform virtue can take root and flourish. But it will also appear, by the invariable experience

rience of mankind, that these causes must be allowed to be as hostile in their operations on the peace and virtue of mankind, on the principle of philosophical liberty, as on the principle of philosophical necessity. For will any of the abettors of this doctrine say, that a child born of wicked parents, and who had never been taught the proper distinctions between virtue and vice, and their influences on the rational interest of the species, who had kept bad company, and acquired bad habits from its early infancy, will any of the abettors of this doctrine say, that this child, so born and so educated, has so good a chance, or is in so likely a way of attaining to a perfection in virtue, as one born of good parents, well educated, and whose conversation has been among people from whom he has received the best impressions? If this is allowed, which I think, from the invariable experience, and the correspondent practice of mankind, cannot well be denied, then it must be allowed, that causes of this nature must affect the virtue of mankind on every principle of volition. For the free-willer must give up the point, when he is obliged to acknowledge any power in precept, example, and

and habit over volition; for to talk of degrees of temptation, or degrees of influence, is talking nonsense, because, if the power of will is superior to motive, it is superior to any temptation or influence. The quantum of the superiority has nothing to do with the argument; for ever so small an advantage in the balance, will weigh down one hundred pounds weight as easily as a feather; and if there is implanted in us such an instinctive knowledge of right and wrong, as is sufficient to resist the power of an ill education, it must be as much in the power of the child of illiterate and profligate parents to act in all the important duties of morality, as in the power of one whose education has been the best calculated to enlighten and improve his understanding. But as the experience and the correspondent practice of mankind, will not suffer them to deny the power of education and habit, let us examine on the authority of this concession, which of the two opinions, philosophical liberty or philosophical necessity, supposing them to produce their natural conduct, is the safest, or the most salutary one for mankind to entertain. Let us suppose the case of a parent or a tutor, who has adopted

adopted the opinion of a philosophical liberty, and who has entertained the notion, that the will has a self-moving power, independent of all external motives. Such a person, if he is reasonably actuated by the principles of the opinion he has adopted, will read his child or pupil many lectures on the ill consequences which attend depraved and vicious elections. But as he does not allow any necessity to arise from the impelling force of external motives, he must always insist on such an independent self-moving power in the will, as is superior to all. Now, a pupil thus educated, or rather thus deceived in that part of truth in which it is most his interest to be well instructed, and instead of being taught where his strength really lies, is persuaded into an opinion, that he has a strength where he has none, will be liable to an equally mischievous mistake, as the famous knight of La Mancha made, when he took the barber's basin for Mambrino's helmet; and like this poor knight, filled with the idea of the possession of a certain magical strength or armour of defence, he will be foiled in the first fierce encounter with a potent enemy, or if he should escape unhurt, the circum-

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stance will arise from some accidental incident, which he not perceiving, or not attending to, will give the whole merit of his escape to the magic power of the helmet: and, thus confirmed in the opinion of the invincible strength of his armour, he will provoke, or at least forbear to fly the attacks of his enemies, till he experiences as cruel and as mischievous effects produced in the whole economy of his mental frame, as this poor knight experienced of wounds, bruises, and disablement of body, and the natural strength of the corporal powers in his many mad and foolish encounters. There is a certain inclination or passion, called curiosity, which arises from the source of the imagination; there are also certain mischievous satisfactions which we propose to ourselves, which lie very near the borders of vice, if they do not actually touch on this forbidden ground: now, when curiosity prompts, and a proposed satisfaction stimulates desire, we shall be very apt, in a full conviction of the power of Mambrino's helmet to go so near these borders, and dwell so long on this treacherous ground, till we find our destruction in the flames, which issue from the hostile quarters, either in their

their power in a subterraneous way of undermining the ground on which we stand, or of reaching us in a level direction.

Let us now suppose, the case of a parent or tutor, who has adopted the contrary opinion of a necessity in the philosophical or moral sense of the word. This necessitarian, if he is reasonably actuated by the principle of the opinion which he has adopted, will instruct his child or pupil on the nature of those principles on which all the sources of his strength depend. He will inform him of the invincible prevalence of motives, and, at the same time, he will teach him the art of arranging circumstances in such a method, as shall give the insuperable power to that motive which shall produce the best volition. He will, like the wise Mentor, arm his Telemachus with the defensive weapons of caution, sagacity, foresight, address, and fortitude; and with that offensive one which consists in the power of combating force by force, and of subduing one potent hostile motive, by the mental arrangement of such motives as are founded in his rational interest. He will instruct him in the use, and habituate him to the practice of habits which

tend to confirm those qualities in his mind, and those affections which are favourable to wise and virtuous volitions. He will teach him to allay the heat of a youthful nature, by introducing in his disposition, and the temper of his mind, an artificial frigidity of sentiment, that happy medium between apathy and passion, rendered natural by long though forced habits. But above all, he will teach him the advantage of that very necessary species of prudence in this kind of warfare to fly, rather than to attack and to gain a victory by a retreat. A pupil thus taught, and thus instructed in the nature of his real strength, the address with which it is to be managed, and the formidableness of those dangers which he is to encounter, will avoid every species of danger which carries an appearance of strength sufficient to affect the ordinary temper of his mind, and his well-grounded resolutions for virtuous and wise volitions. And when he is caught unawares, or finds himself in such circumstances as to be obliged to turn about and face his enemy, he will be thoroughly acquainted with the art of arranging his forces, and of exerting all the latent powers and faculties of his mind, in such

such a method as may best ensure a fortunate issue to the rencounter.

But to throw some illustration on these figures, let us suppose two persons of these two different opinions, the one a free-willer, and the other a necessitarian. Let us suppose farther, that they both of them read in the public papers, that certain licentious prints of the picture or the reading kind are to be exposed to sale. The free-willer, full of his imaginary power on the article of volition, indulges his curiosity without hesitation; whilst the necessitarian, aware of the danger which attends temerity, and convinced of the full force and power of temptation, with a virtuous caution determines not to indulge a curiosity which, by inflaming his imagination, may give his passions and appetites a stimulative force, which it may not be in his power to repel. Now, which of these two persons will be in the least danger of a vicious volition? Again, let us put another case of two persons, the one a free-willer and the other a necessitarian, both of them assailed by a very strong temptation: the one tries to put his self-moving power in action, or rather to restrain the power of its natural action; but in this tremendous

moment, his ignorance of the œconomy of the human mind, and the various springs of its curious mechanism, throws him on the mercy of blind chance or accident, or leaves his security to a providential interposition; whilst the necessitarian, by a full knowledge of the practical use of the faculties and powers of the mind, defends himself, and, in his turn, attacks his potent adversary with all that mastery of art, which, in battles of a different nature, has secured the victories of a Cæsar, or a Marlborough. In which of these two persons will innocence find the strongest assurance of security? or virtue the strongest assurance of defence and success?

The objections which have been supposed to lie against rewards and punishments in another state, have, we think, been sufficiently answered by the statement of that inequality of the means of happiness, which take their rise from the progress and improvement in virtue, or in vice, which have been made by moral agents in this state of existence, and from the necessary use of sharp punishments to correct those mischiefs which accompany a bad choice. In regard to the just dispensation of those punishments

punishments which sinful man receives from his fellow-creature man, the propriety of such punishments takes its rise from the principles of utility and necessity, and its justice from the principles of self-defence, and the agreement and assent to such distribution of rewards and punishments as are adjudged by law, and coerced by government, which, it is asserted, are contained in all political compacts. Men are supposed to give up willingly the unprotected rights of nature for inferior privileges, because these privileges are, or ought to be, completely secured by their obedience to government. But both on the principles of philosophical liberty, and on the principles of philosophical necessity, both in a state of nature and in a state of civil society, there can be no infringement of justice in inflicting even the punishment of death on an offender, whose depravity renders him noxious to the safety of his fellow-creatures, because the act is warranted on the principle of a reasonable self-defence. The magistrate does not, or at least he ought not, to presume to put himself in God's place, as a rigid and a proper dispenser of rewards and punishments on the abstract ideas annexed to merit and demerit, but on a principle of utility and necessity: being autho-

rised for this purpose, by the free voice and assent of his fellow-citizens, he proceeds to inflict such punishment on offenders as the mild dictates of humane laws allow. And he thus proceeds on the principle of an utility arising from that moral necessity which has been contended for, that such punishments on delinquency, may serve as motives, in the way of example, for the restraint of vice; and also on the principle of a necessity arising from the necessary means of self-defence. It is easy to see that rewards adjudged by law, authorised by custom, and dealt out by the magistrate, are to be justified on the same principles.

To the last article of the third objection to the doctrine of a moral necessity, as it is stated in this treatise, viz. that on such a principle, all the praises which are bestowed on virtue, and all the rigorous disapprobations of vice, will lose their grounds in justice, and become childish and puerile expressions of human sentiment, it may be dogmatically asserted, because the assertion is founded on experience, that authoritative criterion of truth, that all the lavish praises which are now sometimes bestowed on virtue, or rather on virtuous actions, and those

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sharp and rigorous disapprobations which sometimes attend vicious ones, and which form so great a part of human sufferings, for human vices have in general no other source than what may be found in a childish and puerile expression of human sentiment; nor ever can have other, unless such a reformation was to take place in the present state of moral opinion, and of moral practice, as would totally banish moral evil from society. If the lavish praises which are sometimes bestowed on virtuous characters, and virtuous actions always attended such characters, and such actions in every walk and situation of life, there might be some reason to believe that they proceeded from an abstract consideration of the worth and value of virtue. But as we find that these praises take the measure of their degree, and often draw their occasion from the circumstances and situation of virtuous characters *, and consequently from the measure and extent of the consequences of

* 'Tis from high life, high characters are drawn,
A saint in crape, is twice a saint in lawn ;
A judge is just, a chancellor juster still,
A gownman learned, a bishop what you will :
Wise if a minister, but if a king
No wise, more learn'd, more just, more every thing.
Pope's Moral Essays, Epistle I. part 2.

virtuous

virtuous actions, as they are supposed to affect public and private happiness; we must be convinced, that such lavish praises flow from the interested feelings of human sentiment; and as they do not arise from any abstract consideration of the worth and value of virtue, or any abstract consideration of the worth and value of virtuous persons, they are as equally fitted to square with the principles of philosophical necessity, as with the principles of philosophical liberty.

The sharp and rigorous disapprobation of vice, which is too often partially inflicted on vicious persons, and with a lavishness which extends to cruelty, also take their rise from the measure and extent of the consequences which follow criminal actions, as they affect public and private happiness, when they do not flow from the vicious sources of envy, rancour, revenge, the desire of levelling great characters, the desire of moving an enemy or a rival out of the way, or the other mode of exalting ourselves to a comparative excellence by the disparagement of our neighbours. Hence the blame and disapprobation of the vicious person, or the criminal action, is never measured by any rule drawn from the abstract consideration of vice, as it stands opposed

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to the abstract consideration of virtue, on the immutable principles of fitness and unfitness; but as the measure of malevolent, or political sentiment prevails, and as the consequences of the criminal action, which never is, nor ever can be in the power of the agent to command, extends to public or private injury. Thus, if an individual in society commits a criminal action, which, by accidental circumstances, is not attended with that injury to the public or to private persons as was expected, and if the vicious agent is happily placed in a situation where neither envy, revenge, rancour, political interest, nor rivalry prevail against him, the diminution of the measure of dispraise which he incurs will be in exact proportion to the accidental diminution of the injury. A thief and a murderer rouses every man's anger; but a bad prince, or a bad minister, or any other person, whose vices, perhaps, are much more extensively mischievous, often escape free from public resentment; because, as lord Bolingbroke observes, the strings of a public interest pull much weaker than the nearer cords which affect a private concern. Thus, because a public injury is not popularly felt as an individual one, it is never

never equally resented; and thus these bad public men obtain a freedom from censure and reproof. Indeed, if the virtues of a good man are thought inimical to any false object of interest in the multitude, they will meet with persecution rather than praise. Men's resentment for vice is, it is true, sometimes heightened by the power of sympathy in very flagrant actions of cruelty and injustice; but in vulgar minds the resentment is both blended, and takes its rise from a sense of private interest. Thus, if a person, whose powerful situation in life secures to him a capability of screening himself from legal punishment, or the infamy of a public sentence, and also a capability of extending benefits as well as injuries, he may go on multiplying offence upon offence, without suffering much from the reprehension of his fellow-citizens; and as the knave in the pillory, and the woman divorced for adultery, form two very opposite instances of that delinquent penalty which proceeds from the disapprobation of mankind, to the knave in ermine, and the meretricious wanton screened by situation and circumstances from public punishment, or the interested rancour of private scandal,

dal *, we may venture to assert, that it is misfortune and situation alone, independent of any justly adapted sentiment of merit or demerit, to that criterion of virtue and vice which is grounded on the abstract fitness of things, which gives to dispraise its measure and its strength. And therefore the dispraise of mankind, as it is a mere human sentiment, founded on interest, agrees as well with the principles of philosophical necessity as with the principles of philosophical liberty. There is no danger that the conviction of the truth of a moral necessity, should make men incline to a weak indulgence to the frailties of their neighbours. Is it not common to see people express resentment even against inanimate beings, which have been injurious to them in any manner. And is it not yet more common to see them destroy, with the appearance of a malevolent feeling, animals who are, by the law of their nature, noxious to them, and can it be supposed that the most ignorant of the human race, act thus on the belief of any criminal demerit in these in-

* See sin in state, magestically drunk,

Proud as a peeress, prouder as a punk.

Pope's Moral Essays, Epistle II.

animate

animate and animated beings. But, say the free willers, the established laws of Providence do not square with our ideas of justice, if men are in any degree sufferers for actions which it was not in their power to prevent. But do not mad persons suffer for infirmities which are involuntary? Is not even bodily deformity, to an unphilosophical mind, often as severely felt by the insults it incurs as moral deformity? Do not often the innocent and the meritorious suffer from the vices of others? Does not an affectionate parent feel more mental pain for the loss of a child, than one who has less natural affection? But where can lie the injustice in causing or admitting of sufferings for the benevolent end of correction, and to produce the greater capability of a future happiness?

There is a rational praise and dispraise which will be found alone to square with the principle of a philosophical or a moral necessity. That sober and moderate praise, which may be reasonably allowed to a finite and dependent being, must exist in his having made a proper use of his powers, and his opportunities, of his having in the stoic language, adapted his pre-conceptions of

good and evil to the exact measure of their real qualities. As such an agent may, in the strict sense of the word, be considered as having been made the instrument of his own rational interest; and the instrument of the rational interest and happiness of all those terrestrial creatures to whom he stands related, he may claim, on the best grounds of reason, the praise and gratitude of society. Whereas, on the contrary, that sober, that moderate, and that Christian dispraise or displeasure, which may be reasonably given to an imperfect creature, surrounded with those difficulties and those dangers, which in some cases are too powerful for his natural virtue, and the small measure of his acquired wisdom and fortitude to withstand, must exist in the sense of a certain comparative, deficiency, to the excellence of more virtuous agents; but this disapprobation will always be tempered with that kind of pity which takes place in the humane breast, when the noxious nature of an animal obliges one who is used to philosophical reflection to deprive him of existence. This dispraise or disapprobation will also be tempered with that Christian charity which induces the trial of moral lenitiveness, before moral

moral caustics are applied for reformation. With that Christian charity which is always active in the best means for effecting the desired reformation, which is apt to teach, patient to suffer, ready to forgive injuries, which mourns over the miseries of a fallen brother because it regards vice as the worst of human defects and human misfortunes, and which never punishes from a principle of wanton cruelty and revenge, but from the necessity of an occasion. Such a moderation in our disapprobation of the erroneous elections of our fellow-creatures, which accords so exactly with religious sentiment, and the precepts of the Gospel, will be so far from affording any encouragement to vice, that it will naturally have a contrary effect. For if vice was always considered as a quality of so degrading a nature, as to demand the commiseration of every humane mind in a superior degree to any natural defect or evil, it would, from that aversion which we have for pity, when we consider it as united to a certain degree of contempt, be more avoided than sickness or deformity of body, if health, beauty, sickness, and deformity of body were among the objects of our choice. And thus, instead

of anxiously enquiring after the corporal health of our friends, we should preserve our anxiety for the state of their mental constitution ; and instead of the common compliment of, how is the state of your health in the corporal sense ? we should adopt the more friendly and significant phrases of, is all well within ; how stand the affections to-day ; are the volitions of the right cast ? Thus such sentiments of pious charity, were they generally encouraged and generally adopted, would become a stronger coercive principle for the enforcement of virtuous elections, than those sanctions of rewards and punishments which exist in the present interested resentments of human sentiment.

On the fourth objection, as it is stated in this treatise, the arguments which have been already urged, if candidly considered, will be sufficient grounds for inducing a greater strength and vigour of religious sentiment on the belief of a moral necessity, than can be induced by the belief of a philosophical liberty : because, it has been shown, that the virtue of all moral agents, and the moral attributes of God himself, have their grounds in the necessity which arises from

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motives ; that this necessity is so far from carrying with it any principle derogatory to a rational agent, that it constitutes the very essence of rational agency ; and as such, it was becoming the goodness of God to bestow on man. : a goodness which is so tempered with a benevolent wisdom, that every inconvenience or mischief which can arise from it, is as far corrected as the nature of things will admit ; and, perhaps, corrected in a manner as to admit of no degree of positive evil. Farther it is to be asserted, that the doctrine of philosophical liberty is hostile to every rational idea which can be formed of perfect benevolence and perfect wisdom ; that such a liberty is so unbecoming the beneficent Father of the universe to bestow on his creatures, that it appears like setting a child of two years old upon its legs, and beating it, because it falls in attempting to walk ; or rather like the giving a privilege merely for the pretence of inflicting a punishment : a punishment inadequate, in rigour, to any finite offence, and inflicted without the proper ends, the benevolent ends of correction and reformation ; a punishment which in no sense of things can be considered agreeable to the attributes of perfect justice and

and perfect benevolence, even on the supposition that a creature, having the free use of his reason, should willingly prefer destruction to self-preservation. But, indeed, the very word temptation supposes an object of desire, which reason would combat if she had sufficient strength. It is on these reasons, then, that the character of the Deity must, in human estimation, on the principles of philosophical liberty, suffer degradation; whereas on the doctrine of philosophical or moral necessity, infinite wisdom and infinite goodness can be traced through all the concatenation of moral causes and their effects. It is also observable, that though the voice of revelation does not condescend to enter into the nice distinctions of metaphysical reasoning, and talks only of freedom in a popular sense, viz. the freedom of action correspondent to volition; yet it every where presents motives to the human mind, as the only impellers of volition; and in all the dispensations of Providence, in regard to human sufferings, which we observe to take place in the human system, they are commonly attended with the salutary effects of reformation.

On the second article of the fourth objection to the doctrine of moral necessity, as it stands in this treatise, viz. that it would relax every principle of attention to rational interest, by inducing an opinion, that all creatures are chained to the foot of fate, and have it not in their power to make their own fortune, nor to meliorate or aggravate the evils of a pre-determined destiny; it is to be answered, that this pre-determined destiny seems to hang as heavy on the doctrine of philosophical liberty as on the doctrine of philosophical necessity. The positive nature of this pre-determination seems more apparently to rest in the prescience of God, an attribute absolutely declared, by the voice of revelation, to be inherent in the Deity, and an attribute which seems necessary for such a providential government as is agreeable to the majesty of the Deity. And whether certain creatures are born with such corrupt and infirm natures as necessarily to occasion depraved volitions, independent of external motives, which never was, nor ever can be denied by the free-willers; for otherwise there could be no accounting for depraved elections; or, whether the weak natures of some creatures

are depraved by motives, is of very little consequence on the question of a pre-determined destiny. Philosophical or moral necessity, however, has this preference of rousing the active principles of the mind; because it shows men the way how they may arrive at the desired port, and they will never quarrel with their company, though they should be obliged to admit of destiny as one of the number; and they may be sure that their struggles, to get rid of the more galling chains of fate, will be attended with the happiest consequences. But to manage this very serious objection in a more serious way, where a rational interest is once thoroughly understood, the very law of our nature forbids that supineness which is supposed to take place in this instance. Ask the miser, ask the man of ambition, whether the one will forbear the offered means of obtaining wealth, and the other of power, on any speculative opinion of a pre-determined destiny? Or, ask the philosopher, of cool and regular affections, whether he will forbear the offered means of advancing the interests of himself, his child, or even his friend, on any such speculative opinion? Ask the gouty and the infirm man, who is

tottering down a deep descent of stairs, whether he will forbear to lay hold of the safe and convenient assistance which the bannisters afford, on the faith of any speculative opinion. Ask the man who is fond of this terrestrial existence, who finds his health invaded, and his life endangered by an acute disease, whether he will withhold the means which medicine affords, on the faith of any speculative opinion?

The doctrine of a philosophical or a moral necessity, though it cannot rationally allow of infinite punishment for finite crimes, yet it cannot rationally deny or set any limits but those of eternity to a sharpness of correction, which may exceed every thing which man e'er felt, or the extensive powers of human imagination can paint. The necessitarian allows, that the punishment must be sharp indeed, and must admit of a rigour and a duration which omnipotence can alone inflict, which is capable of correcting those profligate characters who have continued firm in iniquity, and withstood the ordinary chastisements which attend vice in this stage of existence. The necessitarian argues, that the possession with the degree of the blessings which attend a future state of existence, entirely

entirely depend on the progress which we have made in this life, towards a capability of virtuous enjoyment and virtuous society. He contends for a necessity of correcting, by punishment, the depravity which arises from vicious habits, vicious actions, and vicious propensities, before any creature can by the nature of things, in the ordinary course of God's providence, be capable of being received into the habitations of the blessed. And as he contends for a necessary time of probation for the contracting good habits, and acquiring such an experience in the ways of well doing, as may confirm those good resolutions, and strengthen that infant virtue which follows the voice of an awakened conscience, he altogether rejects as a vain chimera, and a delusive hope, the efficacy of a death-bed repentance, for the avoiding those tremendous consequences which follow a disobedience to the dictates of reason, and the commands of God in this world. And he contends that every man must one time or another set his hand to the oar, and become the instrument of his own happiness, or be certain to remain in irremediable misery.

It is on these grounds that the necessitarian contends, that the opinion which he has

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adopted, affords him the best arguments to rouse the negligent and careless being to an attention to his rational interest, both in showing him the tremendous dangers which follow the neglect of his powers and faculties, and the means to use them to the best advantage, arguments which must have their proper force and use, if there is any thing in pain and misery to which the human mind is naturally averse, or any thing in ease and pleasure to which it is naturally inclined.

On the fifth objection to the doctrine of a moral necessity, as it is stated in this treatise, that by its introducing a negation of all merit and demerit, the pleasing sense of self-approbation will be taken away, and with it the more useful sense of remorse and shame, those strong incentives to repentance and amendment; it may be retorted, that there appears little grounds for self-approbation on the very best use of a faculty which is exercised without the proper motive to influence such an exertion. That the obedience of a child, when such obedience has no other grounds than the indulging its own humour, can never be considered by the parent as of so meritorious a nature as an obedience grounded on the obligations of

of duty, the proper impelling motives. That the pride of an independent virtue is ridiculous and impertinent in a finite creature, and condemned by all the principles of a rational religion. That such pride taints the beauty and perfection of the fairest actions, by filling men with an arrogant self-estimation, and by inclining them to look with contempt, instead of pity and Christian charity on the more fallible nature of their fellow-creatures. That such an arrogant self-estimation tends to weaken that strong sense of allegiance and dependence which is due from the creature to the Creator, who is the only source of all good, and without whose providential assistance in affording the powers and the means with their proper use, none of his creatures can, in any sense of the word, arrive at any degree of virtue, and consequently at any degree of happiness. That from that most dangerous of all the principles of seduction, because by its splendid and seemingly chaste allurements, it is the best adapted to act on the ambitious nature of the human mind, a spiritual and a moral pride, the modest and humble principles of philosophical necessity, are more particularly calculated to guard the purity of human virtue, because, instead of filling

filling the mind with vain and intoxicating phantasms of a self-moving principle of good, it represents the true state of human dependence. And whilst it warns its disciple to guard against every avenue of vice, to keep watch day and night, lest the enemy should come and find him slumbering over his duty, it teaches him an humble, though not a fearful dependence on the power and wisdom of the Deity, graciously to afford him such means of assistance as are best calculated to insure his salvation.

On the position, that the principles of philosophical necessity would produce a negation of those strong incentives to repentance and amendment, the acute feelings of remorse and shame, it is to be observed, that no man ever felt less concern for the breaking of a limb, on the sense that he never intended to do himself any harm. That no fond parent ever felt less regret for the premature and accidental loss of a child, from the consideration that the accident was not occasioned by an intentional carelessness; nor is it the nature of man to sooth the anguish and soften the keeness which attend sensations, called forth by those impressions which the misfortunes attending moral turpitude produce,

produce, by remedies deduced from speculative reasoning. Dishonour in the worst sense of the word, viz. the total loss of moral reputation, the fierce resentment of injured society, the present hour of irremediable woe, the dreadful prospective of more lasting sufferings, in the dark volume of futurity, will all be felt in the full proportion of their energetic powers, and triumph over the faint attempts which can be made by the human mind, to shield itself from suffering, by the attainment of an apathy deduced from philosophic reasoning. Neither can the anguish of remorse be ever softened by the belief of a philosophical necessity, but rather receive an additional vigour from this source of moral feeling. The mere abuse of will can be rectified by a correction of that abuse: but the necessitarian sees with horror, that his misfortunes or his errors have led him into evils, which have occasioned a depravity, which subjects him beyond the power of his natural disposition to the impulse of bad motives; he feels the increased strength of the enemy, and that he has lost a great deal of the dignity and beauty of his nature. And as vice is as hateful to our fellow-creatures as it is inimical to our own

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peace, can it be reasonably supposed that a man will not use his endeavours to avoid the incurring so great an evil, when circumstances bring the proper conviction of its nature to his mind. Can it reasonably be supposed, that if a man was to carry about with him any natural infirmity, which rendered him odious to society, such as a bad favour, or the like, that he would not regret this misfortune, though he should have happened to have incurred it by some error which, as circumstances then stood, he had been impelled to run into; and that he would not immediately set about the means which his understanding pointed out to him, might remedy a defect which was inimical to his own peace, and hateful to his fellow-creatures, with whom he was obliged to associate? And lastly, can it reasonably be supposed, that the sense of freedom from voluntary guilt, will prevent a lunatic, in his lucid intervals, from taking hellebore, or any other medicine, which is believed to have sufficient power to abate or cure his malady, and thus to remove the source of his unfortunate volitions.

C H A P.

is not always visible to us; and that the works of Providence are often hidden from us.

C H A P. V.

Further Arguments for the Belief of a future State, with Observations on the Stoic Philosophy.

GOOD princes and good magistrates, says lord Bolingbroke*, carry on the work of God, and by making men better, make them happier: when these are corrupt, the infection spreads, they corrupt the people, the people them; social love is extinguished, and passion divides those whom reason has united. When the abuse is confined within certain bounds, the condition of many men may be happy, and that of all may be still tolerable; and when the abuse exceeds such degrees, and when confusion or oppression becomes intolerable, we are to consider, that they who suffer deserve to suffer. Good government cannot grow excessively bad, nor liberty be turned into slavery, unless the body of a people co-operate to their own ruin. The laws by which societies are go-

* Philosophical Works, vol. iv. p. 394. et seq.

verned,

verned, regard particulars, and individuals are rewarded and punished by men ; but the laws by which the moral as well as the physical world is governed, regard genera^s and communities, are rewarded and punished by God, according to the nature of things in the ordinary course of his providence, and even without any extraordinary interposition. Look round the world, ancient and modern, you will observe the state of mankind to increase in happiness, or decline to misery, as virtue or vice prevails in their general societies. Thus the Author of nature has been pleased to constitute the human system ; and he must be mad who thinks that any of the atheistical, theological, or philosophical makers or menders of the world, could have constituted it better. The saying of Alphonsus, king of Castile, who found so many faults in the construction of the material world, that he pronounced himself able to have given the supreme Architect a better plan, has been heard with horror by every theist. Shall we hear without horror, the men spoken of here, when they find fault with the moral as well as physical plan ; when they found accusations against the justice, goodness, and wisdom

wisdom of God, merely on their pride ; when they assume, on no other foundation that man is, or ought to have been the final cause of the creation ; and rail as heartily against Providence, as Plutarch represents Epicurus to have done ; in short, when they go so far as to impute to God the introduction or the permission of those evils which neither God is answerable for, if I may use such an expression, nor nature, nor reason, but our own perverse wills, and the wrong elections which we make.

“ I cannot hear any part of this without horror ; and therefore, if I had walked with Wollaston in some retired field, my meditations would have been very different from his : I should have been convinced, that the faculty of thinking is given to sensible animals, as we call them, in a lower degree than to man ; but I should have been convinced, that they have the power of exercising it, in respect to present objects only. The contrary would appear to me on some occasions, as manifest in them, or in some of them, as it appears on others, and on more in the man, who is born dumb. I should feel the superiority of my species ; but I should acknowledge the community

of our kind, I should rouse in my mind a grateful sense of these advantages above all others, that I am a creature capable of knowing, of adoring and worshipping my Creator, capable of discovering his will in the law of my nature, and capable of promoting my happiness by it. I should acknowledge thankfully, that I am able, by the superiority of my intellectual faculties, much better than my fellow-creatures to avoid some evils, and to soften others, which are common to us and to them; I should confess, that as I proved myself more rational than they, by employing my reason to this purpose, so I should prove myself less rational, by repining at my state here, and by complaining that there are unavoidable evils. I should confess, that neither perfect virtue nor perfect happiness are to be found among the sons of men; and that we ought to judge of the continuance of the one, as we may judge of our perseverance in the other, according to a maxim in the ethics of Confucius; not by this, that we never fall from either, since in this sense there would be no one good, nor no one happy man in the world; but by this, that when we do fall, we rise again, and pursue

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the journey of life in the same road. Let us pursue it contentedly, and learn, that as the softest pillow on which we can lay our heads, has been said by Montagne to be ignorance, we may say more properly, that it is resignation: he alone is happy, and he alone is truly so, who can say, welcome life, whatever it brings, welcome death whatever it is; if the former, we change our state, whatever it is; but we are still the creatures of the same God, he made us to be happy here, he may make us happier in another system of being, at least this we are sure of, that we shall be dealt with according to the perfections of his nature, not according to the imperfections of our own. Resignation in this instance cannot be hard to one who thinks worthily of God, nor in the other, except to one who thinks too highly of man. That you, or I, or even Wollaston himself, should return to the earth from whence we came, to the dirt under our feet, or be mingled with the ashes of those herds or plants from whence we drew nutrition whilst we lived, does not seem any indignity offered to our nature, since it is common to all the animal kind; and he who complains of it as such, does not seem to have been set by his

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reasoning faculties so far above them in life, as to deserve not to be levelled with them at his death. We were like them before our birth, that is, nothing ; so we shall on this hypothesis be like them too after our death, that is, nothing. What hardship is done us? None ; unless it be a hardship that we are not immortal, because we wish to be so, and flatter ourselves with that expectation. As well might that emperor of China have complained of his disappointment, when he imagined he had bought immortality of a certain impostor, who pretended to give it, and then died. If this hypothesis were true, which I am far from assuming, I should have no reason to complain, though having tasted existence, I might abhor nonentity. Since then, the first cannot be demonstrated by reason, nor the second be reconciled to my inward sentiment, let me take refuge in resignation at the last, as in every other act of my life. Let others be solicitous about their future state, and frighten and flatter themselves, as prejudice, imagination, bad health, or good health, nay, a lowering day or a clear sunshine, shall inspire them to do ; let the tranquillity of my mind rest on this immoveable rock,

rock, that my future, as well as my present, state are ordered by an almighty and all-wise Creator, and that they are equally foolish and presumptuous who make imaginary excursions into futurity, and who complain of the present."

We have given the reader a large specimen of theistical cant, because we find the tenor of it a condemnation of those principles of reasoning on which we have grounded the immutability of moral truth. It must be plain to the reader, that the author contradicts himself, or is guilty of the highest absurdity, when he declares that man, who, according to his own hypothesis, is stamped by his Creator with the character of vice, for the purpose of adapting his nature to his situation, is the author of all the evils which he suffers by his deviations from the line of moral rectitude: that he is also guilty of an equal absurdity in allowing that the vices and corruptions of individuals, proceed from the corruptions of government; and then in asserting, that every individual who suffers from the abuse of government, suffers deservedly. It must be also plain to the reader, that the author, under the highest professions of

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respect, has written a greater libel against the providential government of God than Epicurus himself, or any of his most audacious followers; that his opinions, whilst they tend to destroy every principle of hope, confidence, and religious assurance from the mind of man, afford no remedy for the misery to which the human species are subjected, but that which lies in an apathy of feeling and sentiment, so contrary to the frame and constitution of nature; that it has stamped a ridicule on the best system of philosophy that ever was, or ever can be planned on a principle of human mortality: a system of philosophy, which, however repugnant to the experience of mental and corporeal sensation, has nothing of those innumerable inconsistencies and contradictions which are to be found in lord Bolingbroke's system of religion and ethics. The apathy, or that state of indifference, which is recommended by his lordship as the only remedy for the evils which he supposes to be designedly inflicted by the Creator on the creature man, is so far from being the only comfort that Omnipotence is willing or able to bestow, that the Almighty has condescended to reveal to us his benevolent intentions.

tions. He requires not of us a slavish reverence on the principle of fear, but invites us to cultivate that knowledge of his goodness which is so well calculated to inspire love; and to those who shut their eyes from the prospect of a blessed futurity, and wilfully continue in the dark gloom of sceptical perverseness, we may truly apply lord Bolingbroke's satirical observation, that they do not seem to have been set by their reasoning faculties so far above the brute animals in life, as to deserve not to be levelled with them at their death. But why so severe? says the sceptic. How can you deduce any argument for the weakness of our reasoning faculties, from doubts which the phenomena of nature so fully authorise? Do we not see that every animated or inanimate being loses that property which supports what we call life, and falls into a state of corruption and total annihilation? We are told, indeed, that some persons have borne testimony to a resurrection of the dead, but can you bring any credible witness to the truth of such a miracle within the memory of man? As the last revelation has failed of its effects, why is it not followed with another, attended with circumstances

of such an authority, as shall change scepticism into the determined principle of certainty? For as God has given us our senses as the only inlets to our knowledge, no testimony which contradicts the evidence of these senses, as they are affected by the ordinary course of the established laws of nature, ought to be received by us.

In answer to these objections of the sceptic, it is to be observed, that, according to this reasoning, revelations attended with circumstances of a supernatural power, must be so often repeated, that they would become the ordinary course of providential government, and turn the empire of human laws, established on the principle of human reason, into a theocratical police. If resurrections from the dead were to become the common objects of observation, where would be the trial of faith; and where would be the trial, or even the reality of that virtue which was forced on the mind and inclinations of man, by the terrors and the hopes arising from such a positive assurance of a reinstatement, which would render the criminal and the deserving the subjects of reward and punishment? Would not such an undeniable demonstration of power and intention, destroy

destroy the force of every other motive for volition, and produce such a necessity for religious sentiment and moral conduct, as by removing all moral evil; also take away all the advantages which have been premised, to attend a state of trial and probation. The rational grounds of faith are of such a nature, and the infirmity of human reason has been so well supported and instructed by revelation, that a repetition of this kind of instruction would be a work of supererogation; and whilst the Deity condescended to force conviction on the minds of the perverse and the negligent, he might introduce a circumstance in the course of his providence which, in the present more enlightened and more generally communicative state of the world, would destroy every principle of action, but those of the slavish kind. Well, says the sceptic, we grant the force of your argument: but can God require the assent of our understanding to what appears to be so incomprehensible, as the re-establishment and restoration of all the powers and faculties on which life and identity depend to a being, whose principles of animated existence are obviously annihilated and lost? To this we answer,

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that the doubts of the sceptic are at last all founded in that ignorance on which a doubt of our [present state of existence might with an equal degree of reason be founded. Are we capable of understanding by what means matter obtains the power of motion? Can we tell how substances acquire the power of voluntary or spontaneous motion? Can we tell in what manner the principle of successive generation is supported? Can we tell what is the nature of that property which is the real essence of all beings? Can we form any satisfactory idea, or are we at all acquainted with those principles of motion by which the mind exerts her faculties? But in answer to those doubts, which are founded on ignorance, it is to be observed, that though the senses are made the inlets of all our knowledge, they were still designed to serve in a subordinate capacity to that higher power which submits to be informed, but not to be governed by them. It is a proper exertion of this higher power, which at once keeps the senses in a due state of subjection, and convinces us, by the means of analogical deduction, that the same attribute of Omnipotence which gave to substances their essence, and endued them with

with various modes of power, can withdraw the same powers, and effect a restoration as easily as it had effected the original gift; and that the same power which produced the universe, and established its laws, is fully equal to any occasional departure from them. And thus, that ignorance, which is inseparable from our situation and circumstances, can form no rational excuse for our want of confidence in Omnipotence.

As lord Bolingbroke has laid great stress, and founds his most plausible arguments, on that inconsistency in reasoning, which is to be found in those divines who argue for an abstract fitness of things, to be perceived by human agents, and a conformity of the divine volitions and conduct with that abstract fitness; and, at the same time, support those questionable points of faith, which evidently militate against the principles of such an abstract fitness; it is most earnestly to be wished, that they would not give such advantages to the enemy, as must arise from the keeping too closely to the literal text of scripture, and that they would not attempt to subdue the reasoning faculty by authority, instead of supporting authority

ty by a criterion which is given us by God as a rule of our faith, and without whose assent religion becomes a mere mockery, and is stripped of every thing capable of rendering its service worthy the acceptance of the divine Mind ; and, in particular, as they are obliged to depart, in many cases, from the literal text of scripture, and to acknowledge that the figurative phraseology of the Eastern language induces a necessity for liberal explication. It is also much to be lamented that they too often debase the intrinsic value of virtue, by representing vice as a thing profitable in itself, and to be rejected only on account of the penalties which are annexed to a disobedience of the laws of God : this encourages a slavish servitude on the ruins of a generous fealty ; leads mankind into a mistake on the principle of a worldly interest ; induces a sordid traffic of delivering up the goods of the body for the sake of the soul, and represents the fountain, and the source of all felicity, the beneficent Author of all good gifts, as a Master, who expects the sacrifice of some of the real objects of happiness as a necessary attainment to a future good. But this is not the voice of reason or of scripture : in
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my service there is perfect freedom, says the Messiah; and the reason is plain, because the empire of religious sentiment, and the empire of reason, are the same; they both emancipate us from the most abject, the most ruinous, and the most painful of all servitudes, that servitude which attends the mastery of the passions, and subjects our reason and our interest to its over-bearing rule: "How many religious authors, how many sacred orators, says lord Shaftesbury, strike at moral virtue as a kind of step-dame, or rival to religion? Morality must not be named, nature has no pretence, reason is an enemy, common justice folly, and virtue misery; who would not be vicious, had he his choice? who would forbear, or who would value virtue, but for an hereafter?"

It has often been observed, but it is to be hoped without any grounds of truth, that some of the most devout people are the most addicted to the interests of self, on the narrowest principles of selfishness. This, if true, must undoubtedly arise from the sordid nature of that allegiance which they pay to the Deity, and from the false conceptions which they have entertained of him, and the generous principles of his service;

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and we must acknowledge, that we have often heard, with regret, some very moral and religious people, with the innocent view, it is to be supposed, of exalting their merit, and making in their own eyes their election more sure, declare, that if they had been assured of the positive mortality of their nature, their lives would have been directed by a contrary rule. Thus, if by such a persuasion they had gained a liberty from some seeming constraints of religion, they would have followed every perverse motion of their will, and found to their cost, that their liberty consisted in the being kept in a continual subjection to their passions, and the being imposed on in their most important choice: for what, indeed, does the severest restraints of religion lay on us, but what the dictates of our reason ought to render agreeable? To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God, are principles on which the essential part of rational religion and rational morality is founded, and ought to meet with the concurrent testimony of every well regulated mind. It is beyond a doubt, that the virtuous affections, duly established in a rational creature, are the only means
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which can procure him a constant succession of the mental enjoyments ; and, therefore, they are the only means which can procure him a solid happiness. To this truth, let those bear witness who can remember the condition of their own mind, under a lively affection of a chaste and a well regulated love, of gratitude, of bounty, of generosity, or of pity ; and can remember it also in the opposite condition, under the hateful and painful affections of lust, envy, anger, and revenge. If any one can doubt, that sobriety, temperance of all kinds, and moderation, are the best means to preserve the pleasures of an uninterrupted health, and the correspondent pleasing sensations, let him compare his corporeal and mental feelings as they were enjoyed under the peaceful reign of virtue, to the lassitude, the satiety, the universally painful sensations which follow gluttony and debauch, and the wild uproar of riot and misrule.

The royal preacher very justly says of wisdom, “ her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace ;” and those who have a sufficient attention to observe, and a sufficient depth of reflection to discover, the amazing superiority of happiness

ness which lies on the side of those who regulate all their affections by the unerring rules of this divine monitor, to those whose conduct is governed by the capricious tyranny of the disorderly affections, will acknowledge, that the calm sunshine of a life well spent, is a very advantageous exchange for the most dazzling gleams of a prosperity ill purchased, with the sacrifice of all which can be deemed excellent in a rational agent. But there is yet another transcendant advantage which lies on the side of true wisdom, that it is in the ordinary course of things a security against every inroad of adversity, which more particularly excites the rigorous tone of the painfully mental sensations. The conduct of a good and a benevolent man so entirely squares with the interest of his fellow-creatures, even of those whose natures are the most vicious, that he will find from the selfish passions of men a support and a comfort, in all those afflictions which he incurs from evils, which are inseparable to human existence: whereas the wicked selfish man, from the same principle of action, has no stable comfort in the affections of his fellow-creatures; and when deserted by fortune, and involved in any

any calamity which his vices bring on him, he will find an enemy even in his bosom companion : he will find his short-lived prosperity, which at the very best was a mixed and a turbulent state of enjoyment, almost instantaneously changed for that wild despair which attends the uninterrupted hostilities of internal and external foes, and he will sink unpitied and unlamented into the abyss of extreme misery. If such, then, is the constant advantages which attend that benign and benevolent character, which extends the exertion of the active principle to the good of every object which comes within its reach, which gives a temporary relief to pain, however pungent, and which, in some degree, softens the grim terrors of despair ; what rational creature would not, in the Stoic language, be ambitious of becoming the shining purple in the garment, rather than the foul web, i. e. a character stained with the deformity of vice, and whose noxious and selfish qualities spread the contagion of error and misfortune to every being who comes within the sphere of its action ?

The knowledge of the true, and the intrinsic value of virtue, as it must raise the very

very rational ambition of attaining its excellence, must, undoubtedly, be one of the most important means for the acquirement of its possession; but the knowledge also of the mechanism of the human mind, which includes the knowledge of its discipline, will be found not only an useful, but a necessary auxiliary in the contest between wisdom and folly, between the dictates of the understanding and the tumultuous desires of the passions and the appetites. A man not trained, from his infancy, in the method of this discipline, will often find himself worsted in the hour of contention: nor ought this to fill him with any more timidity than what corresponds with an useful and becoming diffidence; for can the sobriety of sentiment suffer us to believe, that a childhood and youth spent in a heedless ignorance, will be followed by effects, which can alone proceed from the maturity of a wisdom laboriously gained? "No great thing is to be brought to perfection suddenly," says Epictetus, "when not so much as a bunch of grapes are. If you tell me that you would this minute have a bunch of grapes, I will answer you, that there must be time; let them first blossom, then bear fruit,"

fruit, then ripen ; is then the fruit of the vine not brought to perfection suddenly, and in one hour ? And would you possess the fruit of the human mind in so short a time and without trouble ? I tell you, expect no such thing."

In a comparison between the Stoic and the Christian philosophy, for all true religion may, undoubtedly, be styled philosophy, much, with a great deal of truth, has been said for the superiority of the Christian over the Stoic system. From that elevation of thought and sentiment, says the Christian divine, which the principles of our faith inspire, we must, if we are sincere in our belief, be rendered superior to all the allurements which the transient pleasures of a few years present to us ; with this hope set before us, all the afflictions of this present life will seem light, trifling, and not worthy to be named ; but will be lost in the consideration of that eternal weight of glory which awaits our patient continuance in well-doing. This is a very just description of the advantages which attend the principles of the Christian faith, and which must ever give it a great superiority over the principles of any system of philosophy,

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which is not founded in the belief of a future state of retribution, where every thing which is at present crooked will be made straight, and all inequalities reduced to that exact medium of difference which agrees with the strict rules of justice, grounded on the principle of a perfect benevolence. But before we pass such an utter condemnation on the philosophy of the ancients, as may deprive us entirely of the advantage of that good sense which is to be found in some of their writings, let us consider their treatises as written under the obscurity of pagan darkness, and not too partially compare them with systems of religion and morality, illuminated by the strong lights received by the revealed will of God, and the future dispensations of his Providence.

It has been already observed, that the two first revelations made by God, in the persons of Adam and Noah, had so early lost their influence, by the corruptions of idolatry, that the Greeks had no notion of a future state, until they received some dark and confused hints from the East, in the tales of their first bard, who is known to the moderns by the name of Orpheus; and though a more rational doctrine of the im-

mortality of the soul, was afterwards taught by Pythagoras, who had also gained the elements of his theological knowledge from Egypt, yet it was soon obscured by the idle and mischievous sophistry of philosophical vanity. The common herd of men were ignorant to a pitiable degree, and their betters relished opinions, which gave them the enjoyments of their appetites, free from the restraint of punishment ; and thus the assertion, that there is no Hades, nor no Acheron, nor no Pyriphlegethon, was relished with an avidity which soon banished, from the literary and polite circles, those opinions of more ancient and more sober times, which had kept their ancestors within the useful bounds of religious restraint. To stop that general depravity which necessarily followed atheism, and a scepticism on a state of future rewards and punishments, some of the more intelligent and sober-minded persons attempted a method of reasoning, to convince mankind that virtue, in the strictest sense of the word, was the rational interest of a creature, who claimed that superiority in intellectual endowments, which placed him not only in a superior station to the brute creation, but which equalled him,

in one sense, to the Deity, whom they considered as the original fountain of every principle in nature. Nor did this opinion flow from any criminal arrogance, but from the ignorance of those truths concerning the creation, which are to be found in the writings of Moses. It was a principle of the ancients, that nothing is made out of nothing: and the only difference between the Stoicks and the Academicians was, that as the latter supposed man to stand related God, as part of the same nature, through the course of successive productions of inferior intelligences; so the former placed man in an equal rank with the first principle in nature, by supposing him an immediate emanation from the Deity.

Socrates is so memorable for the glorious attempt he made to reform the manners and the opinions of the age in which he lived, and for the martyrdom he suffered, in consequence of this conduct, that he is styled, by way of pre-eminence, the Apostle of the pagan world; and though he did not commit any of his opinions to writing, yet the gratitude of his numerous disciples, among whom Xenophon and Plato are the most illustrious, has handed down to posterity

terity the sublime documents of their master, and, in particular, the original and comprehensive manner in which he instructed mankind, and his shrewd way of leading them, by pertinent questions, to those conclusions which are conformable to the dictates of right reason. Socrates may be regarded as the father and the source of all the different sects of philosophy, except the Epicurean, which distinguished Greece as the only school for useful and sublime literature, from the period of this philosopher's appearance to the downfall of all science and learning in the total subversion of the Roman empire. The academic sect of philosophers were founded by his disciple Plato*; and the Cynic, by his disciple Antisthenes. Antisthenes, and his followers, maintained the useful principle, that virtue is the highest good, and the end of life; and they treated riches, honours, and power, with great contempt; but their enmity to science and polite literature, and to those refinements in manners, which even

* The Peripatetic school was founded by Aristotle, the disciple of Plato; but Epicurus founded his system of philosophy on the philosophy of Democritus, who was instructed in the rudiments of physics by some of the Persian magi.

the most barbarous societies have adopted, disgusted some of their nicer followers; and in the person of Zeno, who lived about three hundred years before the Christian æra, gave rise to the Stoic sect, which may be regarded as a reformed branch of the Cynic philosophy. The doctrines of this sect, like that of all others which maintain any permanence in the opinions of men, went through a course of gradual improvement, until it was taught in its highest purity and consistence, by Epictetus, at Rome and at Nicopolis, in the reign of Domitian.

Epictetus corrected and explained many of those strong and figurative expressions which had been represented as absurd principles in the Stoic creed: but though the revival of the belief of a future state, which followed the general spreading of Christianity in the time of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, produced a kind of dubious faith on the important article of the personal immortality of the human soul; yet as the principles of this philosophy are founded in the opinion, that the intelligent principle in all beings, is in a finite time, absorbed into the source and fountain of all intelligence, and thus loses the privilege of identity and per-

personal happiness, and with it the future rewards of virtue and the penalties of vice; they found themselves obliged, in order to make their doctrine correspond with the attributes of justice and benevolence in the Deity, to maintain that true wisdom, which, in the Stoic language, is synonymous to true virtue, is, in every sense of the word, its own reward, and vice its own punishment. The conscious merit of having overcome difficulties by the proper exertion of the rational faculty, that sacred deposit committed to their care and use by Jupiter, they regarded as a sufficient recompence for the highest exertion of virtue; and they taught their disciples to consider every trial to which they were exposed by the accidents of life, as marks of the favour of heaven: "Remember, say they, that God, like a master of exercise, has engaged you with a rough antagonist; and to what end? That you may be a conqueror like one in the Olympic games, and it cannot be without toil. To all other pleasures, oppose that of being conscious that you are obeying God, and performing, not in word but in deed, the duty of a wise and a good man; say to yourself, that God shows me to mankind

poor, without authority, sick, leads me to prison, exposes me to death, not that he hates me, heaven forbid! for who hates his best servants? Not that he neglects me, for he does not neglect any of the smallest things: but to exercise and to make use of me, as a witness to others. Appointed to such a glorious service, do I still care where I am, or with whom, and in what situation, instead of being wholly attentive to God, and to his commands?"

The universe, said the Stoics, is surely but ill governed, unless Jupiter affords the means for his subjects to be happy; and it was on this ground of reasoning, that they argued, that every wise man has a self-sufficient principle of happiness; that every thing must be indifferent; which is independent of this self-sufficient principle, whose privilege consists in the power of making a right choice, and adapting its desires to every circumstance which it cannot avoid. Hence, with the Stoics, pain, pleasure, death, life, beauty, deformity, poverty, wealth, fame, infamy, slavery, and power, must in their nature be indifferent, because independent on choice; that the wise man is superior to their influence, which is only experienced

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by those ignorant persons who know not how to adapt their pre-conceptions of good to its real existence. According to the Stoic, he alone is free, who has gained such an empire over passion and appetite, as to mould his inclinations, or in their own words, his desires and aversions, to the will of the Deity, and the necessity of the occasion; and he alone a slave, who has fixed an ideal good to such things as are not within the limits of his own power; an error which necessarily deprives him of his natural liberty, by subjecting him to the capricious sway of his own passions, and to those who are enabled to bestow on him what he ignorantly and foolishly regards as good. As they considered vice and error to be inseparable, or rather that they were synonymous terms for the same principle, so they considered all false conceptions of good and evil, and weak and vicious volitions, as they entrained in their consequences hatred to God, and disobedience to his commands; and a series of consequential evils to the agent, as equally vicious, when these false conceptions and volitions regarded a more or a less important object. Hence arose that famous paradox of the Stoics, that all crimes are equal,

equal, and if we take into consideration, that every volition carried into execution by a correspondent action which militates against our notions of right, and the rule we have laid down for virtuous conduct, is a complete victory over the dictates of our judgment and our conscience, and argues a state of mind unequal to temptation, we shall find, in an abstract view of the question, a greater equality in crimes than we imagined, from a more particular consideration of the nature of offences.

Conduct me, Jove, and thou, O Destiny,
Wherever your decrees have fix'd my station.
I follow cheerfully: and, did I not,
Wicked and wretched, I must follow still,

is an exclamatory prayer often used by the Stoics, who regarded any repining or murmuring at the decrees of heaven, or even the want of a cheerful acquiescence with these decrees, as a great impiety of sentiment. "When death overtakes me, says Epictetus, I would have it overtake me when I am engaged in the care of my own faculty and choice; I would be found studying this, that I may be able to say to God, have I transgressed thy commands? have I

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perverted the powers, the senses, the pre-conceptions which thou hast given me? have I ever accused thee, or censured thy dispensations? I have been sick, because it was thy pleasure and willingly; I have been poor, it being thy will, but with joy; I have not been in power, because it was thy will; and power, I have never desired. Hast thou ever seen me out of humour on this account? have I not always approached thee with a cheerful countenance, prepared to execute thy commands, and the significations of thy will? Is it thy pleasure that I should depart from this assembly, I depart. I give thee all thanks, that thou hast thought me worthy to have a share in it with thee, to behold thy works, and to comprehend thy administration. Let death overtake me whilst I am thinking, whilst I am writing, whilst I am reading such things as these." A wise man, says the same Epictetus, mindful who he is, and whence he came, and by whom he was produced, is attentive only how he may fill his post regularly and dutifully to God. "Is it thy pleasure that I should continue any longer in being? I will continue free spirit-ed, agreeable to thy pleasure; for thou hast made me incapable of restraint in what is

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my own: But hast thou no farther use for me, I submit; I have staid thus long for thy sake alone, and for no other, and now I depart in obedience to thee. How do you depart? Again agreeably to thy pleasure, as one as free as thy servant, as one sensible of thy commands and thy prohibitions; but whilst I am employed in thy service, what wouldest thou have me to be a prince or a private man, a senator or a plebeian, a soldier or a general, a preceptor or a master of a family? Whatever post or rank thou shalt assign me, like Socrates I will die a thousand times rather than desert it. Where wouldest thou have me to be, at Rome, or at Athens, at Thebes or at Gyaros? only remember me there. If thou shalt send me where men cannot live according to nature, I do not depart from thence in disobedience to thy will, but as receiving my signal of retreat from thee: I do not desert thy service; heaven forbid! but I perceive thou hast no use for me: if a life conformable to nature be granted, I will seek no other place but that in which I am, nor no other company but those with whom I am."

The living a life according to nature was, in the Stoic sense, the living a life according to

to the strictest rules of virtue, comprehending in these rules an entire devotion of the sentiments of the mind to the will of the Deity; and as the Stoicks, with all the ancients and some of the moderns, accounted for the phenomena of evil by setting limitations to the power of God, whenever the evil was of such a forcible nature as so far to overcome the natural and acquired strength of the mind as to produce even a reluctant submiffion, they opened the door of death to their disciples, and advised them to depart out of a life which they could no longer sustain with honour to themselves, or to their Maker, or with use to their fellow-creatures, whose virtue might be affected with their unavailing complaints. Do not, said they, disgrace the sacred deposit committed to your care, by continuing an existence stained with vice and infirmity; whilst you live, never complain of God or man; if you complain of the one, you complain of that order of things on which the general good of the universe depends; if you complain of, or are angry with the other, you are angry with a creature who ought to be the object of your pity, and whose errors flow from his ignorance of truth, and

of his greatest good. Every man endeavours to pursue his interest, and no man is wilfully deceived on this essential point: besides, if you never was in the wrong, you never can have been really injured; for it cannot be in the nature of God's dispensations, that one man should do evil, and that another should suffer for it. Whilst you live, live to the honour of God, and to the advantage of his creatures; but when circumstances are of such a nature, that you can no longer live a life of reason and virtue, depart, the door is open; but remember to depart chearfully, and with a thankful heart to God, who has graciously permitted you to be a spectator of the glorious wonders of his power and wisdom, who has committed to your care a portion of himself, and who has condescended to admit you as a kind of fellow-labourer in the great work of producing a general happiness.

The admission of suicide in their system of religion and ethics, is one of the loudest and one of the most popular objections which have been made to the Stoic doctrine; but this objection ought, in the reason of things, to be considered in the light of a comparative, not a positive deformity; it is a comparative deformity, when considered in

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opposition to the more excellent system of the Christian religion ; because, if we do annex any rational idea to the turpitude of suicide, it must be on the principle of an unlimited power in the Deity, and consequently that all the sufferings of his creatures are admitted for the production of a proposed end. Thus, argues the Christian, as it is always in God's power to deliver me out of this exigence, if he thinks it expedient, my voluntary exit will be a sinful deserting my post and a rebellious opposition to the will of the Deity. Again, if we consider the Stoic admission of suicide as reasonably flowing from the principles of ancient philosophy, we must confess that it is so far from a positive deformity, that it is a real excellence in their system, and the only principle which could render it consistent or practicable, because it is the only principle on which such an independence from the power of natural and moral evil, could be procured, as could secure in such a creature as man the uninterrupted practice of so rigid a virtue as the Stoic doctrine exacted. Besides the admission of suicide is perfectly agreeable to the opinion of such a limited power in the Deity, as disables him from protecting his creatures

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tures in all situations: for surely the idea that God exacts from his creatures the endurance of a misery which is so inseparable from the necessity of things, that he has not power to extricate them from it, is an idea very repugnant to perfect wisdom and perfect goodness.

Cicero, in a speech which he made in favour of Muræna, who was prosecuted by Cato and Servius Sulpicius, for a breach of the law passed by Cicero in his consulship against bribery and corruption, in a kind of humorous attack on Cato for the stern inflexibility of his conduct, which he imputes to the stiffness of the principles of that philosophy which he had embraced, mentions among other laughable absurdities which were imputed to the Stoicks, the maintaining, that a wise man is perfectly beautiful, and that a wise man never changes his determinations; but Epictetus represents a positive denial of all distinction as to the external form of the species, as a puerile affectation, because when we only consider forms, we must allow that one form is more beautiful than another: A contrary position, says he, is the foolish and clownish notion of those who are ignorant of the nature of

things, and are afraid, that whoever perceives a difference, must presently be carried away and overcome. Agreeable to the sound principles of his philosophy, Epictetus contends, that the form of the body when brought into consideration with the only true excellence, the beauty of a well regulated mind, is in its nature perfectly indifferent, and ought to be held so by the wise; and he also contends, that as true excellence or beauty does not consist of flesh and hair, but in the due exertion of the mental faculty, if a man took care to obtain this excellence he would be truly beautiful.

As to the second absurd position which is charged on the Stoic doctrine, that a wise man never changes his determinations, Epictetus represents this as a false construction put on those precepts of the Stoic philosophy, which recommends a freedom from restraint, and which enjoins steadiness and fortitude. "We ought to keep our determinations, says he, but not all; only such as are right, begin by laying the foundation in an enquiry, whether your determination be a sound one or not, and then build your firmness and constancy upon it, for if you lay a crazy and rotten foundation, you must

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not build, and the greater and more weighty the superstructure is the sooner it will fall."

One of the popular arguments which has been urged with the greatest success against Stoicism, is that frigidity of sentiment as to all external objects, which it strongly inculcates as necessary to the preservation of the pristine excellence of the faculty of choice; or, in other words, the will, and to preserve the mind in that state of tranquillity and freedom which is necessary to produce volitions which may always correspond with the course of nature, and the will of the Deity. It must be acknowledged that the documents of the Stoics on this subject are delivered with a strength equal to the importance of the principle which they endeavour to inculcate, and have furnished their antagonists with arguments calculated to rouse the resentment of the sympathising part of mankind, who consider this philosophy as an enemy to all the social affections, i. e. an enemy to all which renders men useful and amiable in society.

As Stoicism, with every system of philosophy which prevailed at this time, was burthened with the incumbrance of scepticism.

cism in regard to the personal happiness of the soul in a future state of existence, it was proper, as has been already observed, in order to preserve the piety of sentiment, to maintain that every necessary power was given by the Deity to secure the undisturbed felicity of a rational agent, and this it was impossible to do, without inculcating such a principle in ethics as should free the mind from the rigorous impressions which proceed from the strong transports of grief and passionate sorrow. This is allowed by the very learned and judicious Mrs. Carter, to whose useful labours we are indebted for our knowledge of the excellent discourses of Epictetus; and indeed a tranquil submission to the will of the Deity is every where inculcated in the precepts of the Christian religion, at the same time that rewards are graciously set forth as a proper encouragement to exertions which combat the force of the most natural and the most virtuous affections. But the Stoics aspired to the exaltation of this heroic submission, independent of the pleasing and encouraging hope afforded by the Christian revelation, which, though it must be acknowledged that such a hope is absolutely necessary to sustain the general

practice of a rigid virtue in such a creature as man, and, as such, is agreeable to the divine attributes of perfect benevolence and perfect wisdom to afford, yet candour must admire the attempts made by the Stoics to arrive at this pinnacle of human piety, whilst they were deprived of the pleasing, the glorious, and encouraging prospect of a reward far superior to the value of any possible virtue in a finite being. But on the opinion that this philosophy is an enemy to all the social affections, and consequently to all which renders men useful and amiable to society, let us hear what Epictetus has to say, in defence of his system, to this severe accusation: he very justly condemns Epicurus for advising his followers to preserve their independent happiness, by abstaining from marriage, from public offices, and other ties which were regarded as essential obligations to a good citizen; maintains, that it is the wife, that is the virtuous man, who can alone fulfil all the duties of social life; and after having told his disciples that they were not to be undisturbed by passions in the same sense as a statue, but as one who preserves the natural and acquired relations, as a pious person, as a son, as a father,

father, as a brother, as a good citizen*, he shows, that as all men naturally adhere to that which they esteem their chief good, so one who has set his affections on those things which ought to be indifferent, because independent on choice, whenever those false objects of affection intervene, they will break the slenderer ties of parental and filial duty, of love, and of friendship, and weaken or eradicate all those social qualities in the mind on which the sympathising part of mankind so highly value themselves. This is, in other words, saying what cannot be denied, that a conduct grounded on principle, will always be more regular and more constant, because governed by reason, than a conduct founded on mere feeling and passion, which ever must be subject to be overborne by a stronger feeling, and a more impetuous passion, arising from a false conception of the greatest good; and this is finely illustrated by Epictetus, in the following very natural representation of animal and human conduct: "Do you not often see, says

* The principle of affection through the whole chain of social relation, is strongly inculcated in the Stoic doctrine. Cicero de Finibus, lib. iii.

this philosopher, little dogs carefing and play-
ing with each other, that you would say no-
thing can be more friendly; but to learn
what this friendship is, throw a bit of meat
between them and you will see; do you too
throw a bit of estate between you and your
son, and you will see that he will quickly
wish you under ground, and you him; and
then you, no doubt, on the other hand, will
exclaim, what a son have I brought up, he
would bury me alive! Throw in a pretty
girl, and the old fellow and the young one
will both fall in love with her; or let fame
or danger intervene, the words of the fa-
ther of Admetus will be yours,

"You hold life dear, doth not your father too?"

Do you suppose that he did not love his
own child, when he was a little one? that
he was not in agonies when he had a fever,
and often wished to undergo that fever in his
stead; but after all, when the trial comes
home, you see what expressions he uses? Were
not Eteocles and Polynices born of
the same mother, and of the same father,
were they not brought up, and did they
not live, and eat, and sleep together? did
they not kiss and fondle each other, so that
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any one who saw them, would have laughed at all the paradoxes which philosophers utter above love? And yet, when a kingdom, like a bit of meat, was thrown between them, see what they say, and how eagerly they wish to kill each other. For universally, be not deceived, no animal is attached to any thing so strongly as to its own interest; whatever, therefore, appears to be a hindrance to that, be it brother, or father, or child, or mistress, or friend, is hated, abhorred, execrated; for by nature it loves nothing like its own interest, this is father and brother, and family and country, and God. Whenever, therefore, the gods seem to hinder this, we vilify even them, and throw down their statues, and burn their temples, as Alexander ordered the temple of Esculapius to be burnt, because he had lost the man he loved.*

“When

* Dr. Moore tells a pleasant story of a resentment of a similar kind, expressed by a papist, on a loss he had met with on a venture in merchandize. I prayed to my Christ, says he, fervently and daily for success in this adventure; and was so delicate on the subject, that I would not injure the merchandise, lest it should argue a want

“ Whenever, therefore, any makes his interest to consist in the same thing with sanctity and virtue, his country, parents, and friends, all these are secured ; but wherever they are made to interfere, friends, and country, and family, and justice itself, all give way, borne down with the weight of self-interest ; for wherever I and mine are placed, thither must every animal gravitate ; if in body, that will sway us ; if in choice, that ; if in externals, these ; if therefore, I be placed in a right choice, then only I shall be a friend, a son, or a father, such as I ought, for in that case it will be for my interest to preserve the faithful, the modest, the patient, the beneficent character to keep the relations of life inviolate ; but if I place myself in one thing, and virtue in another, the doctrine of Epicurus will stand its ground, that virtue is nothing, or mere opinion.

“ The governing faculty of a bad man is faithless, unsettled, injudicious, successively

want of confidence ; but instead of meeting the protection which I expected, I lost every part of the adventure, so truly I sold my crucifix to the first purchaser I could meet with. Several instances of a similar kind, even to the threatening and breaking their images, has been related both of the pagans and the papists.

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vanquished by different appearances ; but enquire not as others do, whether they were born of the same parents, and brought up together under the same preceptor ; but this thing only in what they place their interest in externals, or in choice. If in externals, no longer call them friends, than faithful or constant, or brave or free, nay not even men, if you are wise, for it is no principle of humanity which makes them bite and vilify each other, and take possession of public assemblies as wild beasts do of solitudes and mountains, and convert courts of justice into dens of robbers ; nor that prompts them to be intemperate adulterers, seducers, or leads them into other offences which men commit against each other, from the one single principle by which they place themselves and their own concerns, in things independent on choice.

“ But if you hear that these men in reality suppose good only to be placed in choice, and in a right use of the appearance of things, no longer take the trouble of enquiring if they are father and son, or old companions and acquaintance, but as boldly pronounce that they are friends as that they are faithful and just ; for where else can friendship be

be met, but with fidelity and modesty, and a communication of virtue and of no other thing.

"Whoever, therefore, among you studies to be, or to gain a friend, let him cut up all his false principles by the root, by which he will be secure from inward reproaches and contests, from change of mind and self-torment; then, with respect to others, to every one like himself, he will be unreserved; to such as are unlike, he will be patient, gentle, mild, ready to forgive them, as failing in points of the greatest importance; but severe to none, being fully convinced of Plato's doctrine, that the soul is never willingly deprived of truth*, without

* That moderation to offenders, and that apathy recommended by the Stoics on the subject of injuries, is much condemned by some commentators as mischievous in its consequences, by destroying guilt and merit, punishment and reward, blame of ourselves or others, and all sense of misbehaviour towards our fellow-creatures, or our Creator. I am persuaded, however, the Stoics no more than the Necessitarians, ever meant to take away all difference in principles, actions, and conduct; they every where represent every kind of disobedience to God as a great sin, but it was a very necessary part of their system to make sin and error its own punishment,

all these, you may in many respects live as friends do, and drink, and lodge, and travel together, and be born of the same parents; and so may serpents too, but neither they nor you can ever be friends, while you have these brutal and execrable principles.

If we compare these sentiments and documents of the Stoics, with those which are to be found in the precepts given by the Messiah to his followers, we shall not perceive so much difference as may, without such a comparison, be apprehended. We are frequently warned by Christ, "not to set our affections on things on earth, for where the affections are, there will the heart be also." And whilst they endeavoured to extinguish that fire of resentment, which is too apt to rise in the human breast at the sufferance of injury, as hostile to philosophic tranquillity, and philosophic perfection, they did not pretend to pass any censure on the just coercion of good laws. All the ancients, both in the western and the eastern parts of the world, made use of much stronger figures and expressions in their writings and discourses than are allowed by modern critics, and it is by this rule that we must construe the words of the Messiah, and the strength of expression in which he sometimes recommends to his disciples the virtues of patience, forbearance, humility, and charity, whenever an exact obedience to the literal sense of these expressions are found to be incompatible with the nature of things.

And

And we shall find that indifference to every thing which does not regard the purifying our souls in such a manner as may enable us to preserve our allegiance to God, inculcated with stronger figures of speech than is used by Epictetus. "And if any man come to me, says the Messiah, and *hate* not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*." Whoever understands these strong figures of speech right, can understand them in no other light than as a cheerful giving up every interest which interferes with the line of our duty, and a ready sacrifice of all our desires, aversions, pursuits, and affections to the will of the Deity; and surely no improper degree of apathy, nor any sentiment which militates against the social virtues of the human character, can be supposed to be contained in the doctrine of the Christian religion; a doctrine which, beyond all others, recommends and enjoins, as indispensable qualities, the sublime virtues of an universal charity, an universal love, and an universal benevolence.

* Luke, chap. xiv. ver. 26.

It has been advanced by almost all of the Christian writers, that repentance for sins is not enjoined in any system of paganism; but repentance for sins seems to be so congenial to human sentiment, that it is difficult to believe that it should not have a place in every system of religion. It is true, that matters of form and ceremony, such as sacrifices, confession, temporary penance, ablutions, and purifications effected the same deception over the minds of the pagans as they now do over the minds of the papists, and were too often used in the place of the only sacrifices which God will not despise, the sacrifices of a contrite heart; but the forms used in the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, seem to show, that repentance was a necessary part of purification, and that the impenitent could not be admitted. "A man should come to those mysteries, says Epictetus, with sacrifices and with prayers, previously purified, and his mind affected with a sense that he is approaching to sacred and ancient rites: thus the mysteries become useful, thus we come to have an idea that all these things were appointed by the ancients for the instruction and correction of life."

For

For the honour of the Stoicks, it is allowed, both by their friends and their enemies, that they were zealous assertors of a particular providence, and the omnipresence of the Deity*; that they utterly rejected the idle notion of chance, and the dictates of a fate independent of a series of events appointed by the immutable counsels of God, of whose moral attributes they were also zealous assertors; that they inculcated sentiments of high devotion and submission to the will of the Deity; and that their principles of morality were more consonant to the purity of the Christian doctrine than that of any other of the philosophic sects, and were taught with such a spirit, and such a systematic confisstance, that

* The Stoicks were the only sect of pagan philosophers whose opinions on the subject of a particular providence corresponded with Christian doctrine: the Epicureans, the Academics, the followers of Aristotle, and others, constantly maintained, that the Deity regarded the universe in general, but not particular persons and things: and it is from these sources of error that the Christian world has been corrupted with such opinions as are to be found in lord Bolingbroke's philosophy, and which were, partly from ignorance of their tendency, adopted by Mr. Pope in his beautiful poem, the *Essay on Man*, the arguments of which are in general drawn from the maxim, "partial evil, universal good."

they have been the only source from which both the ancient and the modern moralists have drawn all their arguments for the intrinsic value and beauty of virtue, independent of any positive rewards attendant on an obedience to the will of God.

It is the Stoic philosophy alone which in any measure supported the tottering fabric of human virtue, during the general scepticism on the subject of a future state of rewards and punishments, which prevailed in the ages which immediately preceded the Christian revelation; and though it would be ridiculous to suppose that the disinterested principles of Stoicism can have any effect on the frigid sentiments of a carnal and a selfish mind, yet their doctrines are so wonderfully calculated to inspire a liberal enthusiasm in all those whose minds are adapted to receive and cherish the sacred fire, that almost every illustrious character that figured in the pagan world, were the disciples of this school. Cleanthes, the disciple and successor of Zeno, used to draw water for his livelihood all night, and study in the day, and was so poor that for want of materials he used to write down what he had

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heard from his master Zeno, on tiles and pieces of bone, yet did this man, who had great genius, and consequently acute feelings, support this painful state of existence with a cheerful submission, which he expressed in the following sentiment, to be found in one of his poems, and which were continually quoted by all the succeeding teachers of this sect,

“Conduct me, Jove, and thou, O! Destiny!
Wherever your decrees have fixed my station,
I follow cheerfully, and did I not,
Wicked and wretched, I must follow still.”

Among the Romans, Cato of Utica, Marcus Brutus, Thraseus Petus, who suffered under the government of Nero, Helvidius Priscus, who suffered under the government of Vespasian, the two Antonines, and almost every good emperor, whose conduct helped to support the tottering state of the empire, and to give a breathing-time to the subject from the miseries of a capricious tyranny, were educated in the principles of the Stoic philosophy; and it is a doubtful point, whether the admitting of the good of externals, though in a subordinate degree to the

the supreme good, by the Academics, was not fatal to the virtue of some of their followers, and produced a slight tarnish to the otherwise complete character of Cicero; for as this illustrious citizen regarded what he termed *glory*, that is, the praise of the world, as a good worthy the consideration of a wise man, it led him to the indulgence of an over-weening vanity, which, with somewhat too great a warmth of sentiment for the attainment of offices and honours, appear to be the only alloy in his exalted character.*

Among those characters which history and biography more particularly point out, as persons who have done the highest honour to the Stoic school, Epictetus, one of the most accurate and animated teachers of Stoicism, must not, on a principle of justice, be forgotten, because he adhered closely to the rigid dictates of those principles which

* Cicero, in his five books, *De Finibus*, writes as a kind of proselyte to Stoicism, having been led to this alteration of sentiment and opinion by the constancy which he had observed in the patriotism of Cato and Brutus, and other Stoics, who had defended the public cause with the hazard, and even at the expence, of their lives.

he professed, and which he preached to others; and because the adverse situation of life, in which he was thrown, afforded him an opportunity of carrying into practice the severest rules of his philosophy.

It is reported of Epictetus, that whilst he was the slave of Epaphroditus, the freedman and the courtier of Nero, that his master once put his leg to the torture: in this trying situation of temper, Epictetus, with great composure and even with a smiling countenance, said, " You will certainly break my leg;" and when this had really happened, he added, in the same tone of voice, " Did not I tell you that you would break my leg;" It is not improbable, that Epictetus might owe his freedom to the remorse of Epaphroditus for having treated so worthy a character with such a shocking inhumanity; but, however, the teaching of philosophy, in those corrupt times, was attended with so little emolument, that Epictetus lived in almost as great a poverty as Cleanthes had done before him; and his whole furniture, whilst he resided at Rome, is said to have consisted of a bed, a pipkin, and an earthern lamp.

The following distich which Epictetus wrote of himself, and the following sentiment, to be found in the fragments which are preserved of his writings, and annexed to his discourses, contain a very beautiful and animated description of Stoicism, such as it was taught and practised by the author.

"I have, in body maim'd, as I was poor ;
Yet to the gods is Epictetus dear."

"A soul conversant with virtue resembles a perpetual fountain, for it is clear and gentle, and potable and sweet, and communicative and rich, and harmless and innocent."

The compositions of the Stoics contain such excellent rules of self-government and of social behaviour, with such a pious reliance on the aid and protection of Heaven, and of a perfect resignation and submission to the divine will, that they may be rendered very useful, to enable us to carry into practice the commands of the Gospel ; for without the proper method of disciplining the mind, both reason and faith are vain ;

for as, according to the observations of Mr. Locke, the present strong desire of enjoyment will too often be attended to, in preference to any view of distant good; so when the animal spirits are once put into violent motion by any impression hostile to our virtue, we shall have reason to lament, with the poet*, the feeble powers which we receive, either from the principle of faith or the principle of reason:

Who if she lend not arms as well as rules,

What does she more than tell us we are fools?

Teach us to mourn our follies, not to mend:

A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend.

The defects which are to be found in the doctrine of the Stoics, proceed from their considering the infirm and dependent creature man, in the light of a self-sufficient independent being; but this, as it has been already observed, necessarily followed the building of their system on the principle of the personal mortality of the soul; and these defects plainly show, that it is impossible that any sound

* Pope's *Essay on Man*, epist. ii.

system

system of religion or morals can be established, but on those principles which are consonant to the enlightened reason of man, and which form the principles of the Christian religion, viz. an abstract fitness of things, unlimited power, wisdom, and goodness of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments.

F I N I S.



E R R A T A.

Page 2, line 12, *for* is, *read* are.—idem, l. 19, *for* hours, *r.* hour.—p. 9, l. 20, *for* has acted, *r.* has hitherto acted.—p. 20, l. 15, *for* has acted, *r.* has hitherto acted.—p. 16, l. 11, *for* has, *r.* have.—p. 20, l. 9, *for* in a manner, *r.* with such strength and clearness.—idem, l. 26, *for* in a manner, *r.* in such a manner.—p. 21, l. 6, *for* shewed, *r.* showed.—idem, l. 25, *for* arisen, *r.* since arisen.—p. 23, l. 21, *change the note of interrogation from the word death? to the word works?*—idem, l. 24, *for* render it a doubtful question among some, *r.* render it doubtful among some.—p. 26, second note, l. 6, *for* Madame, *r.* Monsieur.—p. 30, l. 27, *for* this *r.* these.—p. 36, l. 3, *for* ren, *r.* render.—idem, l. 7, *change the semicolon at the word produce; for a full stop. and at l. 12, change the full stop at the word support. for a semicolon;*—p. 50, l. 5, *for* unanimated, *r.* inanimate.—p. 63, l. 17, *for* is, *r.* are.—p. 73, l. 14, *for* is *r.* are.—p. 76, l. 19, *for* For, *r.* But.—p. 77, l. 20, *at the word sages? change the note of interrogation to a full stop.*—idem, l. 26, *for* tends, *r.* tend.—p. 99, l. 1, *for* in, *r.* out of.—idem, l. 4, *for* and, *r.* and a more.—p. 103, l. 22, *for* makes, *r.* make.—p. 107, l. 12, *for* these, *r.* those.—p. 112, l. 26, *for* to punish, *r.* that he will punish.—p. 122, l. 20, *for* on, *r.* no.—p. 132, l. 1, *for* national, *r.* rational.—p. 134, l. 5, *for* with, *r.* on.—p. 114, l. 19, *for* that, *r.* which.—p. 193, l. 10, *for* as objects good, *r.* objects as good.—p. 199, last line, *for* to falsities, *r.* to take falsities.—p. 221, l. 10, *for* with, *r.* from.—p. 224, l. 11, *for* confits, *r.* confit.—p. 292, l. 11, *for* related God, *r.* related to God.

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